Welcome to the December issue of Almeria Living, the last of 2020, that year which no-one will ever forget!

We have been fortunate enough to bring you 11 issues this year, a major achievement thanks to our amazing team. It has not been easy but our aim to help other businesses shout about their services during such difficult times was key to our success.

For most of us the Christmas & New Year celebrations won’t be the same this year but take heart, make the most of all the different ‘techy’ ways to stay connected, and look forward to a new and healthy year ahead.

We hope you enjoy your read this month and please don’t forget to continue telling our advertisers that you saw them in the Almeria Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in January 2021!! - the magazine will be on the street on Monday 4th.

Karen (Ed)

After the last issue we would like to wish all our readers and advertisers a very Merry Christmas and all the very best for 2021.

We are grateful for all the support and lovely comments throughout the year and it is always a pleasure to deliver a great magazine every month.

Diane Lawes
0044 7393 665 954
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We would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

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The No 1 Attic
31st December.

We will bring you the updates over the following months.

Last Minute Passport, Licence & Matriculation Checks for UK Citizens

Vehicle Matriculation
The final thought for this month is the registering of UK plated vehicles in order to get a Spanish number plate. You will need to have an NIE number in order to achieve this.

Once again, it must be in process with Trafico by the end of the year.

Any UK plated vehicles that need to be matriculated from the New Year onwards will also be subject to import duty as well as the emissions fee.

If you would like any further information or assistance with any of the above then contact the offices of C.A.T. Services.

Driving licences
If you have residenecia here in Spain and are still in possession of a UK licence, you need to exchange it for a Spanish one before the 31st December.

If you have applied for residenecia, got an acceptance letter but waiting for a rare fingerprint appointment, then you can also apply for your Spanish licence immediately.

For those of you who have applied for your residencia/TIE ID card but are waiting for the acceptance then you too can apply for your Spanish licence with the stamped application form but only if you have an NIE number.

Finally, for those who do not yet have an NIE number or are not in the country to be able to complete the medical and the process to exchange your licence it is now possible to ‘register your intention to exchange’. This last option will allow you to complete the task within the first 6 months of 2021.

At the time of going to print, it has not yet been confirmed how the driving licence exchange will affect UK licence holders after the 31st December. We will bring you the updates over the following months.

Step by Step Passport guide for UK citizens

1. Book a medical appointment

2. Attend the medical appointment

3. Ask for an appointment to exchange your passport

4. Attend the passport exchange

If you are not in possession of a TIE ID Card then you will be required to have at least 6 months validity on your passport at the time you arrive. It is not necessary for this to be the case at the time of leaving the country to return to UK.

Loss of additional months
Don’t be caught out! Be aware that you no longer qualify for the additional months, of which there could be 9, that may have been added to your passport when last renewed. For example, my passport was issued on 11th September 2013 with a written expiry date of 11th October 2023 but in reality this will expire on 11th September 2023.

If you are not in possession of a TIE ID Card then you will be required to carry your original passport and Residencia at all times. We are likely to be stopped more frequently by the police so they can carry out the necessary checks on our rights to be here in Spain.

UK Passports
6 months on arrival
From January 1st 2021, when travelling to any other country you will be required to have at least 6 months validity on your passport at the time you arrive. It is not necessary for this to be the case at the time of leaving the country to return to UK.

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Spanish Provinces & their Capitals

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. Our next of Spain’s provincial Capitals takes us to Logroño in La Rioja.

The area north of the Ebro is known as Rioja Alta, which has a mild, rainy climate. The southern part is Rioja Baja which is hotter and drier.

Apart from wine, La Rioja is also famous for the large amount of dinosaur footprints that can be found in the region, and there are several ‘dinosaur trails’ with models of dinosaurs scattered over the countryside.

About 40% of La Rioja’s territory is protected natural space, which makes it one of the regions with the highest percentage; the natural spaces amount to 3.56 of the national total although it is one of Spain’s smallest regions, the smallest on the Iberian Peninsula.

The city of Logroño is the capital of La Rioja and home to 151,113, almost half, of the region’s 315,675 souls.

Historically, Logroño has always been a place of passage, both by the River Ebro and several roads and trails which lead through it, the most famous of which is undoubtedly the Camino de Santiago. In the Middle Ages it was a point of dispute between the old Spanish kingdoms of Castile, Navarra and Aragón due to its situation near the borders of them all, turning it into a strategically important city.

The climate in Logroño is influenced by the passing of the River Ebro which runs through its northern part. The annual average temperature is mild, about 14ºC, although in winter it often drops below zero, and in summer it rises to the mid-thirties. The average annual rainfall is 400 mm.

Logroño constituted an important place of passage already in Roman times, and a large mooring place situated by the nearby Monte Cantabria kept the old town’s trade alive up until the 11th century.

La Rioja is probably one of the most famous regions in Spain, known all over the world for its wine production. It is home to the wines produced under the classification ‘Denomación de Origen Calificada Rioja’.

It is a single-province autonomous region in northern Spain, and it borders on the Álava province in the Basque Country, the region of Navarra, Zaragoza in Aragón and Burgos and Soria in Castilla y León.

The highest point in La Rioja is Monte San Lorenzo which reaches 2,271 MASL. The region is traversed by seven rivers and is also known as ‘The Seven Valleys Region’. The river Ebro runs through the region for a 120 km stint; it enters the region at 445 MASL and leaves at 260, obviously travelling at great speed.

The status of the city grew in the Middle Ages with its strategic importance. In 1521 it was laid under siege by a French general together with the forces of Enrique II of Navarra. The city council sent the following missive to the general: ‘Logroño will not open its gates to the enemy as long as there is one citizen left who is able to fight. We will defend ourselves till death’.

Logroño was under attack with artillery fire and troop assaults, and the city withstood it for two weeks. But realizing that it would not be able to hold out forever, some brave citizens penetrated the French encampment during the night of 10th June spreading fear and confusion together with the rumour that the Duke of Nájera was on his way with 20,000 soldiers.

This was enough to spook the French and Navarrans, and the very next day they broke camp and left.

This was celebrated the day after, and ever since the celebration has been repeated every year on 11th June near the old City Gate, Arco del Revellín.

Today Logroño is mainly noted for its ‘tapas trail’ which is chiefly found in calle Laurel, which is famous all over Spain. There are some 60 establishments where you can sample the succulent Rioja gastroonomy and their excellent wines – or any other drink that takes your fancy.

The street got its name (Bay Leaf Street) because in the old days it was where the cortesans lived, and in order that their clients would know whether or not they were available, they would hang a twig of bay leaves from their balconies when they were free. In times of crisis almost all the balconies had bay leaves hanging from them, thus giving the street its name.

But there is much more to Logroño than food and wine; it is home to a wealth of monuments and history, and its inhabitants are always friendly and welcoming to any stranger visiting.

Logroño in La Rioja
Reindeer – All Year Round

As we all know, Christmas is a busy time for Santa Claus and his reindeer and coming Boxing Day they are all ready for a good, long rest. And nobody thinks much about them until the following Christmas.

But reindeer are very real all year round, and here are a few facts about these hardy animals that have been around since the end of the last ice age some 12,000 years ago.

Reindeer differ from other deer in that both the females and the males grow antlers. They shed their antlers every year. The bulls shed theirs in November when the mating season is over and they have no more need for them, whereas the cows hold on to theirs until a couple of days after calving.

While the pregnant cows have their antlers and the bulls have lost theirs, the cows dominate the feeding ground. Only once the calf has been born does the cow shed her antlers. She has to in order to come on heat.

The southern subspecies are normally larger than their northern subspecies, their habitat and the seasons.

There are many subspecies of reindeer in various sizes and locations. Each subspecies has a distinct coat colour, and in the dark, although this is only a theory. The reindeer do not have very good vision, and scientists think the sound may be to help them stay together when they walk in the dark, although this is only a theory.

There are many subspecies of reindeer in various sizes and locations. The southern subspecies are normally larger than their northern cousins.

The north American caribou, which is divided into several subspecies, can be found with a shoulder height of up to 120 cm and they can be 150 to 230 cm long. The bulls weigh between 70 and 150 kg, the cows 40-100 kg. The boreal woodland caribou, the largest of the sub species, can weigh as much as 270 kg. In some sub species the males are twice as large as the females.

The Norwegian wild reindeer have been part of life in Norway since the stone ages according to archeological finds.

By the 19th century, due to the use and breeding of domestic reindeer, the species was virtually wiped out. It disappeared from Sweden and Finland and almost all of Norway; there were just a few specimens left some of the mountainous areas in the south.

This led to the reindeer being completely protected and all hunting of them prohibited in 1902-1906. The population grew as a result, but after a few years the situation became critical once more, and it was thought that the total population of wild reindeer in Norway was only 2,780 specimens.

Hunting quotas were established for wild reindeer in the 1930s to recover the population, and the situation took another turn for the better, also helped by the fact that some tame reindeer got lost and absorbed into the wild population. By the mid-1990s the wild reindeer counted some 30,000 specimens in 26 areas in southern Norway.

The domesticated reindeer live mainly in Lapland, which covers areas of northern Norway, Sweden and Finland. There are more than 200,000 reindeer being farmed there and they are an important part of the Sami culture.

Once slaughtered, no part of the reindeer goes to waste.

The flesh is eaten or sold, the fur and hide are used for clothes and shoes and the antlers are carved and used for tools, handles or beautiful artefacts.

The reindeer have been an integral part of Sami life for centuries, both in cultural rituals and as working animals. They were traditionally used as beasts of burden, but their role in modern Sami society has changed, and they are increasingly popular in sports while their traditional jobs are being taken over by snow scooters.
The Almería Living Team wish all our Readers and Advertisers a very Merry Christmas and a hopeful 2021. Thank you for your continued support.
Although firmly entrenched as a Christmas icon, the tale of “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” is relatively modern, written in 1939 by a US retail giant Montgomery Ward had traditionally purchased and distributed coloring books to children as a holiday promotion, but the advertising department decided it would be cheaper and more effective instead to develop its own Christmas-themed book in-house.

The assignment to develop an animal story fell to Robert May, a department store adman. Here is how it all came about…

The story behind that shiny nose

Plans to print another 1.6 million copies the following year were shelved by paper shortages due to World War II, and Rudolph remained on hiatus until the conflict’s conclusion. When the reindeer story returned in 1946, it was more popular than ever as Montgomery Ward handed out 3.6 million copies of the book.

In 1947, the retailer’s board of directors, stirred either by the holiday spirit or belief that the story lacked revenue-making potential, signed the copyright for “Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer” over to May. In short order, May licensed a commercial version of the book along with a full range of Rudolph-themed merchandise including puzzles, View-Master reels, snow globes, mugs and slippers with sheep wool lining and leather soles.

In 1949, songwriter Johnny Marks, who happened to be May’s brother-in-law, set Rudolph’s story to music. After Bing Crosby reportedly turned down the chance, singing cowboy Gene Autry recorded the song, which sold 2 million copies in the first year and remains one of the best-selling tunes of all time.

In 1949, song writer Johnny Marks, who happened to be May’s brother-in-law, set Rudolph’s story to music. After Bing Crosby reportedly turned down the chance, singing cowboy Gene Autry recorded the song, which sold 2 million copies in the first year and remains one of the best-selling tunes of all time. By the time he died in 1976, Rudolph had become a piece of modern folklore and a metaphor for overcoming obstacles, embracing differences and recognizing everyone’s unique potential.
A Truffling we will go!

The Truffle Fair in Orísoain

The small village of Orísoain in Navarra, home of some 100 souls, celebrates the truffle in their annual Feria de la Trufa de Orísoain usually held every year in the second weekend in December.

The fair was started as an initiative by a local authority in order to promote this rich resource that abounds in that part of Navarra.

The fair consists of a series of events that promote the knowledge and consumption of truffles. The most popular events to watch are the collections of truffles either aided by dogs or by wild boar.

The female wild boar, Cochi, who is quite an institution in truffle circles, has performed every year in this truffle hunt, but this year she will concede the honour to her great granddaughter, Tina.

Of course eating is another key feature of this fair, and various dishes with the ‘Black Diamond’, as the truffle is also called, can be tried in the restaurants of the area, or you can participate in the great common meal that is included in the price of the ticket of admission.

Talking about truffles – now’s the Spanish season for chocolate truffles!

Chocolate Truffles

According to legend, the chocolate truffle was created in the kitchen of French culinary giant Auguste Escoffier in the 1920s. One day, when he asked his apprentice to make pastry cream, the unfortunate chap accidentally poured hot cream into a bowl of chocolate chunks instead of the bowl of sugared egg he should have aimed for.

He thus, unwittingly, created a mixture which was later named ‘ganache’. This is basically hot cream mixed with chocolate chunks, as you will have gathered from the above.

As the chocolate and cream mixture hardened, he found he could work the chocolate paste with his hands to form a bumpy, not quite round ball. As the chocolate and cream mixture hardened, he found he could work the chocolate paste with his hands to form a bumpy, not quite round ball. After rolling the new creation in cocoa powder, he was struck by their resemblance to the luxurious truffles from the French Périgord region and the Piedmont area of Italy.

Ganache is used as the centre for chocolate truffles and it is either rolled in cocoa powder or coated with chocolate. Today they come in many guises. But plain or crunchy, covered in chocolate, sugar or cocoa powder, flavoured or not with champagne or liqueur - the chocolate truffle is the King of Christmas Treats!

You see it everywhere this time of year – in all the shops and supermarkets, shelves and shelves full, special displays of vast ranges of variations on the same theme: TURRON!

But what exactly is it?

Turron is a sweet made by cooking honey (or sugar) to which peeled, toasted almonds are added. And after that there is no end of variations, as the shop displays indicate.

Turron is a very old, traditional sweet of Arabic origin. It has been popular for centuries, and not only in Spain.

It is said to have been invented by the Moors in Jijona, Alicante, more than 500 years ago, and the name of Jijona still goes hand in hand with turron.

There are two basic types of turron: turron blando (soft), or Jijona, which has a smooth consistency, and turron duro (hard), or Alicante, which is more like nougat in consistency.

From there, turron has been developed into an infinite variety of flavours: vanilla, praline, chocolate, egg yolk, various fruit flavours, to mention but a few...

The discerning Spanish housewife knows her turrones.

There are different quality labels, the best being ‘suprema’, for which soft turron has to contain a minimum of 60% almonds, and the hard one 64%. After ‘suprema’ comes ‘extra’, followed by ‘estándar’, the latter only being produced by a few factories.

There really is something for all palates, so next time you go to a supermarket, take your time to have a look at all the different types of turron, you are sure to find one that will appeal to you!
**Cooking with Nina**

**It all fits in a bowl!**

It’s finally getting cooler and we start longing for warming, filling, ‘cozy’ food. I do anyway.

So here are some ideas for bowl-and-spoon food to help you through the cold months. And an idea for homemade stock which you can freeze and turn into a lovely soup in January. Read on…

**Curried Stew**

Not being English and fully sharing the Brit’s love of Indian and Pakistani curry dishes, I just think of curry as yet another spice for obtaining the flavour I fancy.

That’s how I used garam masala and Madras curry in this stew, and we loved it!

**Ingredients for two:**

- 300g pork in cubes
- 1½ tsp garam masala
- 1½ tsp Madras curry
- 50ml white wine
- 2 mature tomatoes cut into wedges
- 1 small onion cut into wedges
- 1 red pepper cut into strips
- 2 tbsp tomato frito
- Salt and pepper
- 200ml stock
- ⅛ leek cut into fine slices

Heat the olive oil in a stew pot and brown the meat and onion until it starts taking colour.

Add the curry powders, cook them in the oil for a minute or two, then pour in the wine using it to loosen any sediment off the bottom. Let it bubble until the alcohol has evaporated.

Throw in the pepper strips and let them fry until they turn soft, then add tomato frito, salt & pepper and tomato wedges and cook until the tomatoes start to dissolve.

Add the stock, bring to the boil, lid and let it all bubble gently for 30 – 45 minutes until the meat is tender and all the ingredients are well incorporated.

Finally, add the leek slices, warm through and serve hot on a bed of rice.

Easy and delicious everyday food!
Patatas Riojanas – Potatoes from the Rioja

Seeing as we visited La Rioja in our monthly province feature, I though I’d share this lovely recipe with you once more!

Cooking chunks of chorizo in a stew brings the best out in the sausages and adds a delicious richness and flavour to the pot!

When you use chunks of potatoes in Spanish stew recipes, you part cut, part break off the chunks to help release starch to thicken the sauce.

Ingredients for four:

- 1 kg potatoes, cut/broken into chunks
- 200g chorizo sausage (a string of), cut into 1-2cm pieces
- 1 onion, chopped
- 2 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 green pepper, deseeded and chopped
- 1 bay leaf
- 1-1½ tsp paprika
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper

Heat the oil in a large, fireproof casserole dish and gently cook the onion, garlic and pepper until soft. Add the potatoes, paprika and chorizo sausage and stir for a couple of minutes until the potatoes take a little colour.

Pour in water up to about two thirds, add the bay leaf, bring to the boil, cover and let it bubble for ten minutes.

Take out a couple of chunks of potato, mash them lightly and return to the dish. (This also helps thicken the sauce). Add a bit more water if needed.

Bubble on for another 25 minutes and serve steaming hot in bowls with spoons. And some crusty bread to mop up the sauce.

¡Buen provecho!

North and South

I’ve got two lovely soups for you this month, both with minced meat. Apart from that they have quite different ingredients, because one is from Germany and the other from Turkey.

They are very different, but equally delicious!

German Minced Meat Soup

Ingredients for 2-3:

- 300g butternut squash, peeled and cubed
- 300g potatoes, peeled and cubed
- 300g minced meat
- 100g carrots, peeled, cut in half lengthways and sliced
- Small piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- A bit each of oregano, salt and pepper, paprika and nutmeg
- 500ml stock
- Olive oil
- Spring onion, finely sliced

Heat the oil in a soup pan and throw in the ginger and onion and fry them until the onion starts going soft. Add the meat and some salt and pepper and fry until it resembles breadcrumbs.

Now it’s time for the butternut squash, potatoes and carrots to join the party. Cook all together for a couple of minutes, stirring, before pouring in the stock.

Loosen any sediment off the bottom, season to taste with the oregano, paprika and nutmeg, cover and cook on medium heat for 20-30 minutes until the vegetables are tender and done.

Add the spring onion and serve piping hot!

Turkish Country Soup

This is the south of our North South minced meat soups. It has been a favourite of mine for many years, it’s tasty, filling and warming. What more can you want?

Ingredients for four:

- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 250g mushrooms, chopped
- 300g minced meat
- 1 clove garlic, bashed and chopped
- 1 x400g tin tomatoes
- 800ml chicken stock
- 3 tsp paprika
- ½ tsp salt
- 125g soup pasta
- 1 red, green or yellow pepper, deseeded and chopped (I used three halves I had in the fridge)
- 1 bunch parsley, washed and chopped

Heat the oil in a large pan then add the onions and let them fry until soft. Turn up the heat a little and throw in the mushrooms cooking them fiercely until they start taking colour. Add the meat, turn down the heat again and let it cook along until it’s all separated and browned. Let the garlic cook along for a minute until it becomes aromatic, then pour in the tomatoes and stock.

Add paprika and salt, bring it to the boil and let it bubble for about 15 minutes, stirring from time to time.

Now add the pepper and five minutes later the pasta. Let the soup bubble until the pasta is done, stir occasionally, then add the parsley and adjust the seasoning.

Bring it back to the boil and serve piping hot.
Turkey Soup
Part 1

Here’s Part One of your January turkey wing soup. Don’t miss out!!

No food waste R us!!!

Are you one of those that don’t bother to cook your turkey wings and throw them out? Don’t!! They make the most delicious soup for two!!

If you don’t want to have soup over the holidays, just make the stock and freeze it for later use.

You can even use vegetable cut-offs and peel from your Christmas dinner preparations for the stock. Just leave them in a big bowl of water overnight, take them out with a slotted spoon, change the water and leave them again until you make the stock. That way any dirt and earth will have been dissolved and fallen to the bottom.

Ingredients for the stock:

- 2 turkey wings
- 1 onion, quartered
- Cut-offs and peel from carrots, parsnips, Brussels etc.
- 2 bay leaves
- Twigs of rosemary, thyme, oregano or whatever you’ve got
- Salt & 6 pepper corns
- Oil

Heat the oil in a large soup pan and throw in the wings. Cook them in the oil over medium heat, turning, for quite a long time letting it cool in the pot allows the fat to stiffen and when you lift them in oil over 1.5 litres of water. Cover, turn up the heat and bring to the boil.

Once it’s bubbling, turn down the heat and let it simmer for about an hour. Turn it off and leave it to cool.

Letting it cool in the pot allows the fat to stiffen and when you lift out the vegetables and wings it sticks to them.

Pick the meat off the wings discarding the skin, fat and bones. Reserve the meat. Throw the vegetables to your chickens – or in the bin if you must.

Sieve the stock, return it to the pot and boil it to reduce it to about 1 litre.

You can now stick your stock and turkey meat in the freezer until the time comes when you fancy a lovely bowl of soup.

Ribera del Duero

Turkey Soup Part 1

Turkey is rarely found on a Spanish Christmas dinner table. The main meal is usually taken on Christmas Eve and is likely to consist of fish or lamb (or both) with another big meal on January 6th; Three Kings Day.

Here at Riley Towers on Christmas Day this year beef will be the main attraction, suitably aged (a bit like me) and roasted to perfection and preceded by smoked salmon. But what wine are you having I hear you cry. Well, to get into the right mood it has to be Cava Brut to start (Brut Nature can be a bit too dry for some) and to accompany the beef I have selected a red wine from one of my favourite Spanish wine regions - Ribero del Duero.

Ribero del Duero is about 150km north of Madrid, around the town of Valladolid on the River Duero and not far from Rioja which shares several characteristics. The River Duero runs westward through the heart of the region before crossing the Portuguese border and becoming the River Douro. The main grape variety is Tempranillo which the locals call Tinto Fino. Most of the vineyards are around 800m above sea level and the summers are hot, winters are cold and rainfall is low - all factors which contribute to the rich, full bodied style of the wines.

A particular favourite of mine is Finca la Cruz Reserva 2016. As a Reserva it has to spend one year in oak barrel and a further two years ageing in bottle before it can be released. This is a BIG, full, rich wine of 14.5% alcohol – not for the faint hearted – and the perfect partner for my beef yet the cost is under ten euros – excellent value!

Lidl stores are currently stocking Finca la Cruz Reserva 2016 at 8.99 euros. No doubt many of us would have liked to be spending the festive season with friends or family in the UK but are understandably reluctant to travel in the current climate. There are numerous mail-order wine merchants plying their trade throughout Britain and most are very good and offer an efficient service. The “club” which wins the most prizes is The Wine Society which has been operating for well over one hundred years. Membership would certainly make a welcome Christmas present – the cost is a one-off payment of forty pounds, but the recipient receives a voucher worth twenty pounds and, thereafter a full and informative catalogue every quarter. Prices start at a fiver and orders over seventy-five pounds are delivered free. If you are unhappy with a wine, for whatever reason, the cost is refunded without question. I have been a member for about twenty years and can thoroughly recommend The Wine Society. www.thewinesociety.com

I wish you all the season’s greetings and hope for a happier and safer New Year. © Bill Riley
Succulents! By Valerie Fuller

Succulents! What plant is more appropriate for this part of the world? Succulents encompass a vast family of drought tolerant plants that include, of course, Cacti. The colour, form and size of succulents mean they can fit into whatever the gardener can offer them, whether it’s a bowl of mixed plants or a hectare or more of landscaped grounds.

Whereas Cacti are naturally found only in the Americas, ranging from the south to the north, Succulents are endemic to many countries worldwide. Africa is probably the most prolific as far as Succulents are concerned. They are collected worldwide and continuously hybridised now by growers and plant breeders everywhere. Some fabulous hybrids exist now both in colour and form, all due to the existence of their wild parents.

For this reason, Succulents have a massive following plus, of course, they are usually very easy to care for as long as you realise they are living water storage containers and so need very little water. Ours in the garden exist only on rain water and in my area, near Cartagena in Murcia, rain is a rarity!

Nearly everyone knows about Aloe vera or Aloe barbadensis to give it the correct name but too many people seem to class every Aloe they see as an Aloe vera! There are hundreds of Aloe varieties ranging from tiny 7cm tall ones to several metres tall Tree Aloes. Some have the most stunning flowers and many flower more than once a year. The trouble again though is that Spanish garden centres rarely stock an exciting variety and offer mainly A. vera and A. arborescens or Pulpo as it’s commonly known as here. Such a shame as many Aloes have interesting, spotted or striped leaves as well as beautiful flowers. The photos are of Aloe flowers in my garden.

Continued on page 22 ...
Kalanchoe tomentosa is at the other end of the scale. It’s a small, bushy plant with soft, furry leaves [tomentosa] that are edged in brown or dark red. As with many succulents, it is easily propagated from cuttings or a leaf. Take a cutting and insert in some gritty compost and water after a week or so and for leaf propagation, just lay a leaf on the same type of open, gritty compost and wait for the magic to happen! Kalanchoe luciae is also a great garden addition. It has large rounded leaves that take on a very distinctive red colouration in cold weather or very hot weather. Kalanchoe thyrsiflora is similar in shape and habit and also comes in variegated form. These 2 species can be hard to differentiate and it’s easier to see the difference once the plants flower. Thyrsiflora flowers are heavily scented and very yellow while the K. Luciae flowers are a lot less scented and the flowers are more of a yellowy green colour. The Kalanchoe family is huge and it’s well worth tracking down some of the less common varieties, either from collectors or the internet.

Succulents are wonderful little plants that are great for mixing succulent pots or ground cover in the garden as well as the larger types which are super dot plants in the border or in a planter. The leaves can range in colour from grey, bright green, maroon or edged in bronze or red, great for adding colour. Some have tiny, fat leaves while others have a more typical leaf shape. A well-known hanging species in the Barros Tail or Sedum morganianum, and there are others too. Something for everyone surely!

Echevarias must be the stars when it comes to colourful leaves! Red, blue, brown, grey, green, yellow and green, blue with red tips...... the choice seems endless!! Echevaria flowers are pretty and long lasting too. They are generally shades of orange in colour but some are red or even white. Like most succulents, their charm isn’t with their flowers but with their colour and form.

Aeoniums are another example of succulents. Again, they come in various colour combinations but the most stunning are the bright yellows in the variegated varieties. As with many succulents, Aeoniums are monocarpic which means they die after flowering. The multi branched varieties don’t set flowers from every branch so the non flowering branches continue to grow until next flowering time.

There are Aeoniums to suit every occasion, whether it’s a centrepiece for a dry garden or to add to a bowl with other miniature succulents. Some have rosettes the size of dinner plates whilst others are the size of a five cent piece. Their flowers are mainly yellow though some varieties are white or cream in colour. My favourite in the garden I think is the variety called Cyclops. It has huge dinner plate size rosettes in a stunning colour combination of bright green and bronze inner leaves while the outer leaves are a dark maroon. Quite spectacular, especially when the flowers start to form.

Succulents, unbeatable for dealing with the hot and dry climate of southern Spain but no good if you have very cold, frosty winters!
How Many Handshakes?.....

I told Karen that I wanted to take a rest from writing after I’d finished my last article until something grabbed me. Well, being awake in the middle of the night I began thinking (regular readers will know where I do my best thinking!).

I began thinking about not being able to shake hands thanks to Covid!

There is a theory, officially known as “six degrees of separation” but more commonly called “the six handshakes rule.” The idea is that we are only six handshakes away from any other person on the planet! When the idea was originally conceived in 1929 by Hungarian author Frigyes Karinthy. He believed that it was possible to get a message to any person in the world by means of a chain of no more than six people!

The concept has become popularised by the idea that we can shake or have shaken the hand of someone who in turn has shaken the hand of… and so on until you get to The Queen or Donald Trump or the person of your choice with a maximum of six shakes!

“I’ve danced with a man, who’s danced with a girl, who’s danced with the Prince of Wales”, was a song written in 1927 by Herbert Farjeon, that illustrates the idea that these second or third hand contacts were important. So, how easy is it to do this, can you get to the Queen without meeting the Archbishop of Canterbury, who certainly has shaken the Queen’s hand. That’s four shakes! She has done so, with numerous others including Donald Trump (if that’s what rocks your boat!) So you can manage the Donald in five! Also in five I think you can manage every Prime Minister since Ramsay MacDonald.

I think most Brits can manage the Queen in 6 or less. If you have shaken the hand of a C of E vicar, he will have shaken the hand of his Bishop, who in turn will have done so with the Archbishop of Canterbury, who certainly has shaken the Queen’s hand. That’s four shakes! She has done so, with numerous others including Donald Trump (if that’s what rocks your boat!) So you can manage the Donald in five! Also in five I think you can manage every Prime Minister since Ramsay MacDonald.

The Queen also receives the Ambassador or High Commissioner of virtually every other country in the world, they in turn will have shaken the hand of their own Head of State and that puts you six shakes away from Kim Jung Un and every US President since Eisenhower! Her grandfather met Ghandi, so you are only six shakes away from him too.

You can, of course, shorten the chain if you’ve met someone further up, like the Bishop or even the A of C. That releases more steps beyond the Queen. You can get closer to the Queen without meeting the Archbishop. If you know, or have met, someone who has received an honour (MBE, OBE, knighthood, etc.) directly from the Queen then you are there in two!

You can manage the Prime Minister (present or past), via the Queen, of course. But many can do so more directly. Many of us have met our MP or have had his/her handshake imposed on us during canvassing. Though not as popular a technique these days many will, as babies, have been kissed by those trying to gain support! Via the MP you are two shakes from the PM or the party leader if not the PM and then one more step to the PM.

The Queen has met the Spanish Royal family so we are only one more step away from them.

I have a bizarre connection with them. When I was teaching, back in the 70’s one of my colleagues had a sister who was a “Norland College Nanny”. She was employed to care for one - Felipe Juan Pablo Alfonso de Todos los Santos de Borbón y Grecia whom we now know as King Felipe VI. I met her and thus, have held the hand of someone who has wiped the nose of the King of Spain! (Su Majestad, supongo que nunca podrá leer esto, pero si lo hace, ¡acepte mis disculpas por mi ligerezas!)

Continued on page 26.....

By Mike Woolnough
For Catholics there is probably a similar short number of steps to the Pope. Priest, Bishop, Archbishop, Cardinal, Pope. That’s five handshakes. But a large number of Parish Priests have had an audience with the Pope and if that was the case with yours you are there in two! If not there is probably a shortcut further up the chain.

Now, I think there is a serious side to this. The world has become a very small place. If, in fact, we are only six handshakes away from every other person in the world does that not mean we are close to them and ought to take a more caring, loving attitude towards them?

I have thought mostly about moving sideways making contact with people who are alive today, but we can also use the concept to move back in time. My Grandmother (whom I “met” about 1943/4) was born in 1867, so one “handshake” takes me back 153 years, if she could claim the same thing then I am two Handshakes away from someone who was alive during the reign of Queen Anne! Three, takes me to Elizabeth I, fourth to Henry IV, the fifth handshake takes me to the reign of Henry III and my sixth handshake brings me to someone who was alive during the reign of Henry I. Another one would take me back before the Norman Conquest! In reality I would probably need more handshakes because the further back you go the shorter the lifespan of most people was. However, it begs an interesting question, how many handshakes are we from Jesus?

If we could go back in 153 year strides we would need about 12 handshakes to reach the time of Jesus. It has been suggested that in reality we would need a minimum of 14 handshakes. If you can tap into the line of Popes then because of the Apostolic Succession where the Papacy is handed on from the first Pope, St Peter, who was one of the twelve Disciples, to the present you will have a direct line to Jesus.

If this six handshake rule is actually true (and research seems to suggest it is) then we are in close contact with every other person in the world (with the possible exception of really isolated tribes). If we take the steps into the past then we are only about seven or eight from the time of William the Conqueror, another couple to Alfred the Great and perhaps we are about twenty handshakes away from Jesus!

If you are bored during lockdown try working out how you can connect with people in other parts of the world in six or less steps!(Try to avoid using the Queen!)
CHRISTMAS 1915

Christmas Eve 1915 was like no previous Christmas. This year the town square was festooned, not just with decorations and Christmas trees, but with posters stating that Your Country Needs You! As I looked around at the busy mothers and laughing children anticipating the next day and all the happiness it would bring, I thought about my brave older brother, James, who had eagerly gone to France to fight the enemy. In fact, he could not wait to sign on and join his friends overseas such was the spirit of patriotism and confidence that year. In a corner of the square a band was playing carols and a few hardy souls were braving the chilly wind and singing with gusto.

I stood talking to my friend George about mutual acquaintances and how the war was progressing. George was of the opinion that it would be all over by next summer but he had also predicted victory by this Christmas so I did not pay too much attention to his views. As we chatted I gradually became aware that everything had gone quiet. A strange hush had descended on the square. Looking towards the town hall I saw the reason. Like a khaki snake a line of dishevelled soldiers, led by a sergeant, was entering the square; each soldier holding the hand of the man in front while his other hand led the soldier behind him. Some had their eyes bandaged against the light. Others shuffled with unseeing, milky eyes fixed on an imaginary horizon. One after another the unhappy line made their uncertain way. Still they came, that dreadful crocodile of wasted humanity; there must have been one hundred of them making their way towards the barracks. We stood transfixed. A lady nearby was sobbing softly to herself; children looked shocked and confused. My mind inevitably turned to James. Could he have been among them? His last communication had lacked the usual spirited joviality of earlier letters and had hinted that conditions were far from good in the trenches.

George mumbled his goodbyes and drifted away. I remained standing for a while as the awful realisation gripped me that the war was not some great adventure but was, in reality, a time when happiness, normality and optimism were replaced by suffering and misery. Please let James come home safely I prayed to myself as I slowly walked up the hill to the family home. A telegraph boy rode past me on his bicycle whistling cheerfully and I found myself wondering whose festivities would be ruined by the contents of his satchel.

© Bill Riley"
Why a Christmas Tree?

To most of us Christmas is not Christmas without a Christmas tree. But why? And where did the tradition come from?

Brits and Spanish alike tend to decorate their house for Christmas when December arrives, and a Christmas tree is an integral part of this tradition. It brings out the Christmas feelings and thoughts in us and we would not want to be without it.

The tradition consists in putting a spruce into our lounge or living room and decorating it with numerous ornaments, although nowadays spruces made from plastic or other synthetic materials are seen far more frequently than their natural cousins.

The coloured baubles, which can be made from glass or other, less fragile materials, as well as garlands, lights and the star are traditionally the protagonists of our Christmas tree ornaments, although there are many weird and wonderful additions nowadays, and often we have added our own traditions to the decorations.

We have to look back several centuries to find the start of the tradition.

Before Christianity spread all over Europe there was a cult which revered an adored tree which held great symbolism and importance for the Nordic tribes; the name of the tree was Yggdrasil.

A priest called Boniface copied the idea and used it to try to spread the gospel to the Germanic tribes. Boniface cut down a tree and called ‘the tree of the Child Jesus’, as a sign of peace and solidarity.

Once these tribes had turned to Christianity, the Christians used the same idea for celebrating the birth of Christ.

A tree which was at first decorated with apples and candles became, with time, our Christmas tree decorated with baubles and lights. And over the centuries we also acquired the habit of putting the presents from Father Christmas and the Three Kings under the tree.

Germany was the first country to decorate Christmas trees, but after a few hundred years the costume spread, first to Great Britain and the Scandinavian countries, where the cold winters added the Christmas magic.

The first Christmas tree did not reach Spain until the end of the 19th century, when Sophie Trobetzkoy, a Russian princess married to a Spanish aristocrat, decided to use a species covered in ornaments as the centre piece for her Christmas decorations. Since then it has become as integral a part of Spanish Christmas as in all other Christian countries.

The traditional Christmas tree decorations actually do have their significance. The star is, indeed, the star of the show, and is placed right at the top of the tree; it is the most important of the decorations. It symbolises the faith that leads to Christianity just like the star led the Three Kings to the Child Jesus.

The baubles symbolise the gifts granted to man by God, and the lights symbolise the light of Christ. The tree itself represents life.

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Before Buying Your Christmas Tree

Check the colour of the tree – it should be an intense green, and there should not be any grey or brown marks on the needles.

Sniff the tree to make sure it has a pleasant smell; the smell of fresh pine is unmistakable.

The needles should be flexible and not snap or fall off when you bend them.

Hold the tree upright, lift it and bump it gently on the ground to make sure no branches and lots of needles fall off. If only a few needles drop, it will be okay.

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Natural Christmas Trees

More and more people choose to buy a fresh, live Christmas tree, both to revive the proper old tradition, and to avoid unnecessary use of plastic.

However, if you go for this option, remember that this is a living organism, and it needs looking after as such. That way you will get more joy and a longer life from your tree.

1. Place your tree near a window.

Just like any other plant, your Christmas tree needs light. The ideal situation is near a window that gives onto the sun, but without placing the tree in the actual sun light as this will dry it out.

2. Place your tree near a window.

Also, near a window, you can give it a little blast of cool or cold air from time to time, remember it comes from a fresh, cold climate.

3. Keep your tree watered.

You will need to water your tree almost every day. There should be plenty of water in its base, and the level should never be below the level of the base of the tree.

This will also help reducing the amount of fallen needles.

You can also hydrate it with a water spray. Apart from making your tree look fresher and live longer, this will also work as a security measure as it makes your tree less inflammable.

4. Keep your tree watered.

Make sure you do not place your tree near fireplaces, radiators or wood burners as these sources of heat can damage it quickly.

You should also turn off the lights at night, as the lights are actually a source of heat and dry out the tree.

It is recommended that you use LED lights.

Spain’s First Christmas Tree

Sofia Troubetzkoy was a princess of Russian origin whose second husband was Pepe Olorio, ‘The Great Duke of Sesto’, 17th Marquis of Alcalicetes and mayor of Madrid at the end of the 19th century.

She was considered one of the most beautiful and elegant women in Europe of her time, and she has gone down into history as the woman who made the Christmas tree modern in Spain.

The duchess claimed to be the daughter of czar Nicholas I (although she was actually the daughter of prince Sergei Vassilevitch) and she was treated as such for her whole life.

Her first husband was Charles Auguste de Morny, Napoleon III’s stepbrother, who was the French ambassador to Russia in Saint Petersburg. Upon his death in 1865 the truth about his adultery became known, and she left for Deauville in France to start a new life.
We would like to thank everyone for their continued support during this hard year and wish you health and happiness into the New Year.

We wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all our customers.

Best wishes to all our customers and we wish everyone a very Happy Christmas & hope next year will be a good one!

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The Twelve Days of Christmas

By Vic Davey

What makes a good Christmas song?

Think about Slade, Wizzard, Wham and how popular they are still maybe you get the idea. But there is a song which has been around for some 230 years, is really a Carol and started life as a chant or rhyme, without any melody at all. It’s ‘The 12 Days of Christmas’. You all know it and will have sung it and many of you, I’m sure, will know all the words.

It is believed to be of French origin and the actual ‘gifts’ have changed over the years since it was first chanted. The actual tune we are familiar with was first composed in 1909 by an English composer, Frederic Austin who was also a singer and music teacher.

The first gift is thought to be not a pear tree but a mishearing of ‘juniper tree’ or ‘June apple tree’.

The four ‘calling’ birds was a Frederic Austin amendment to the original which was ‘colly’ birds, a regional expression meaning ‘black’ birds, but ‘canary birds’, ‘coloured birds’ and ‘corley birds’ are also found in other English regions.

Similarly, the order of the gifts changes too with ‘Ships a sailing’ and ‘Ladies spinning’ appearing in later versions.

Nobody really knows the true meaning of the song, only that it started it off and each subsequent player having to add a new verse but also recall and quote the previous verses.

Continued on page 34 ....
Traditional Christmas Carols go back to the 4th century although many of them were not sung in church. It is believed that they were originally not songs at all but dances accompanied by singing. So what actually is it we traditionally sing at Christmas time, a Carol, a song or a Hymn? It seems to depend on who you ask and where you are. Those which have hung around the longest come from European traditions, mostly Latin, English and German. Mind you, I did come across the first Canadian, Native American Carol in the Huron, Wendat language called “Jesous Ahatonhia”, ‘Jesus, he is born’. Just saying.....

I guess most people have a favourite Carol, whether you attend Church regularly or just go for a Carol service or maybe a Christmas Eve Midnight Mass.

Whilst Carols are mostly about the celebration of the birth of Jesus, they vie with Christmas songs about Santa and sleigh rides and snow but, to me, the line between the two is quite blurred.

One of the earliest recorded English carols comes from the 15th Century and is called “Adam lay ybounden”. It actually had nothing to do with Christmas and more to do with Adam and an apple!

Traditional Carols became so much part of our childhood, I’m sure most of us could sing several verses without the need for a song sheet. “Away in a Manger”, “Hark the Herald Angels”, “While Shepherds watched their flocks by Night”, although, as kids, we sang “While Shepherds washed their socks by night”. I defy anyone to sing the right words having sung the alternative version.

Our Spanish friends also have favourites, many of which are regional. Two Galician Carols come from the 13th Century and are attributed to King Alfonso X. Similarly, in Catalonia they have “Fum, fum, fum”, which, apparently mimics the sound of a drum or guitar and “El cant dels ocells” which is Song (or Carol) of the birds.

Perhaps, more familiar to us are the traditional Spanish carols like “En un burrito orejon” meaning, ‘On a donkey with big ears’. “Noche de Paz” is another popular Carol and equates to the English “Silent Night”. The melody is the same but the words, very different.

Whatever Christmas traditions we have and whichever songs we like to sing, most are handed down to our children and grandchildren and so on.
Adolfo Suárez
The First Democratic President After Franco’s Death

Adolfo Suárez González was born 25th September 1931 in Cebreros in Ávila, the eldest of five siblings. He enrolled in Salamanca University in 1949 to study law; he graduated in 1954. His political career started in 1956 when he met Fernando Herrero Tejedor, who was the civil governor of Ávila. Herrero became his mentor and appointed him head of the First Section of Ávila’s Civil Government.

In 1958 he moved to Madrid to prepare for the state exams at Colegio Mayor Francisco Franco, and in 1964 he obtained a job in the technical staff of the Marina Social Institute, a public body under the Ministry of Labour, Migration and Social Security. During this time Suárez was entrusted with different jobs within the Franco government, thanks to Herrero Tejedor. He held the posts of secretary of the National Movement and Council, again thanks to his friend Herrero Tejedor, and he kept this post until his mentor died in a traffic accident in June the same year.

Upon Franco’s death in November that year, Adolfo Suárez was appointed minister in Carlos Arias Navarro’s first government. But as the transition towards democracy progressed, King Juan Carlos I appointed Adolfo Suárez President of the Spanish Government in July 1976.

One of Suárez’s biggest challenges was the dissolution of the Franco government’s structures which had been in place for more than 40 years. This became the birth of the Political Reform Project, which he used for legalizing leftist parties which had hitherto only existed underground, such as Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) and Partido Comunista de España (PCE).

Just under a year later, in June 1977, the first democratic elections after the dictatorship took place. The Unión de Centro Democrático (UCD), led by Adolfo Suárez, won the election and he stayed on as President of the Government.

On 4th July, Suárez formed the first government of the recently re-established democracy, constituted by members of the different parties that made up the UCD’s liberals, Christian democrats, social democrats and ex-phalangists.

Once he had become the first democratically elected president after Franco’s dictatorship, Suárez signed the so-called Moncloa Pacts, which dealt with social, financial, legal and political reform, were vital for the progress towards democracy.

One year later the Constitution was adopted. This led to elections in March 1979, the result of which was that the UCD won and Suárez stayed on as president for four years.

1975 became a turning point for Adolfo Suárez as well as for the rest of the Spanish population. In March he was appointed general vice secretary of the National Movement and Council, again thanks to his and elected director of RTVE. In 1969 he was appointed general director of RTVE, and he kept the post for four years.

In May 1980 the PSOE, led by Felipe González, presented a no-confidence motion which, although it was not adopted, left Suárez and his government seriously weakened.

Under pressure from political tensions and the crisis within his own party, Adolfo Sánchez resigned as president of the government and the UCD on 29th January 1981.

After all the political bickering in Spain and an attempted coup d’état followed by Calvo Sotelo’s appointment to the post of president of the government, Adolfo Suárez left his place as a member of the executive committee of the UCD and went on to forming a new party, Centro Democrático y Social (CDS).

The CDS obtained two seats in the 1982 general election, and four years later it became Spain’s third strongest political party when it won 19 seats.

However, in the 1991 election the CDS obtained dismal results, and Adolfo Suárez left his post as leader of the party and retired from active politics.

Sadly, the last years of the ex-president’s life were marked by suffering. He lost his wife to cancer in 2001, and only two years later his eldest daughter fell victim to the same illness.

In May 2005, Suárez’s son announced that his father suffered from Alzheimer’s and had lost his mental faculties.

On 23rd March 2014, after a life dedicated to politics and having been one of the key figures of the Spanish transition, Adolfo Suárez died in Madrid at the age of 81.

In spite of enjoying the support of a large part of the population, Suárez had to deal with a crisis within his party and a hard opposition.

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Beds Bases Pillows

Puzzle Time
Puzzle solutions on page 90

Easy

Regular Sudoku
Every Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically.

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

Across
1 Girl
3 Sentimental fondness (4,4)
9 Version of a language
10 Hair
11 Dead tired
12 Laugh wildly
14 Agreement
16 Grass cutter
19 Senna shrub
21 Old
24 Omit vowels
25 Appease
26 Teachers
27 Sensed

Down
1 North Star
2 Vibrate
4 Blunt
5 Stun gun
6 Pretend (4,3)
7 Christmas decoration
8 Rouse
13 Emphatic
15 Russian empress
17 Share star billing (2,4)
18 Caravan
20 Coil of yarn
22 Visibly shocked
23 Boxing prize

Medium

Gift Items
Metallic Carpentry
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Across
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5 Stun gun
6 Pretend (4,3)
7 Christmas decoration
8 Rouse
13 Emphatic
15 Russian empress
17 Share star billing (2,4)
18 Caravan
20 Coil of yarn
22 Visibly shocked
23 Boxing prize

Medium

5 8 3 1 5
4 9 2 8
3 1 5 2 8
2 6 4 5 9
1 9 8 7 3
6 9 5 2 4
7 3 5 6 2
8 3 7 6 9

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas

Clues:
Across Down
1 Girl
1 North Star
3 Sentimental fondness (4,4)
2 Vibrate
9 Version of a language
4 Blunt
10 Hair
5 Stun gun
11 Dead tired
6 Pretend (4,3)
12 Laugh wildly
7 Christmas decoration
14 Agreement
8 Rouse
16 Grass cutter
13 Emphatic
19 Senna shrub
15 Russian empress
21 Old
17 Share star billing (2,4)
24 Omit vowels
18 Caravan
25 Appease
20 Coil of yarn
26 Teachers
22 Visibly shocked
27 Sensed
23 Boxing prize

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Special Spanish Christmas and New Year Celebrations

Tío de Nadal
In the Catalonia area of Spain there's a Christmas character called 'Tió de Nadal' (the Christmas log) or he's sometimes known as 'Caga tió' (the pooping log!). It is a small hollow log propped up on two legs with a broad smiling face painted on one end. From the 8th December (the Feast of the Immaculate Conception) Catalan families give the log a few morsels of food to 'eat' and a blanket so it is not cold at night. Depending on the region, on Christmas Day or Christmas Eve, the log then 'gives out' small gifts! People sing songs and hit the log with sticks to help its 'digestion' and the log drops sweets, nuts, and dried fruits (well actually someone puts their hand under the blanket and takes a 'gift' out from the hollow!) When garlic or an onion falls out of the log, all of the treats are finished for the year.

Running around in red underwear
Whilst many decide to plunge in freezing cold rivers or seas to welcome in the New Year, things are just a little different in a village near Valencia. In celebration of San Silvestre, the local folk of La Font de la Figuera celebrate the arrival of a new year by stripping down to their underwear and running through the streets. One important point if you are going to join in next year - the underwear must be red.

Celebrate New Year Twice!
No, it isn’t because of the time difference.
The tiny village of Berchules celebrate New Year’s Eve twice each year. Because a power cut in the mid-nineties meant that New Year’s Eve had to be cancelled the village decided to reschedule the big event to the first Saturday in August. This occasion was such a success that they’ve run this second New Year ever since. Any excuse!

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As this year comes to an end, we are very pleased to say we have had a fantastic year in property sales & rentals and hope other professional agents had the same. This year should have been the best for many years partly due to Brexit but of course many property buyers could not get here thanks to Covid 19.

We would like to thank our buyers, owners and tenants so much for your support during a very difficult year. 2021 will probably start a little slowly as always in January but promises to be another brilliant year as soon as buyers can get over here.

What has been frustrating for property sellers has been the uncertainty in the market and the reduction in viewings they have had whilst watching other neighbouring properties sell. Sellers often ask “How come you’ve sold lots of my neighbours’ properties and mine has only had a few viewings recently?” The answer is that viewings are down as a lot less people just have not come to view just those properties, they made a very short list of properties, came to view just those properties and with as many agents as they liked. There was no rush! However, this year, buyers decided to work with and spent more time researching from afar via the internet, phone calls and emails. They made a very short list of properties, came to view just those properties and made a quick decision which they wanted to work with and spent more time researching from afar via the internet, phone calls and emails.

This year should have been the best for property buyers. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19. Many property buyers could not get over here. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19. Things have not been able to get here. However, this year, buyers decided to work with and spent more time researching from afar via the internet, phone calls and emails. They made a very short list of properties, came to view just those properties and made a quick decision which they wanted to buy. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19. Many property buyers could not get over here. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19. Many many times and look at as many areas, properties and with as many agents as they liked. There was no rush! However, this year, buyers decided to work with and spent more time researching from afar via the internet, phone calls and emails. They made a very short list of properties, came to view just those properties and made a quick decision which they wanted to buy. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19. Many many property buyers could not get over here. Many who bought didn’t even come to see the properties thanks to Covid 19.

So, to get your property noticed please make sure yours is correctly priced and perfectly presented to attract those vital property buyers. Our best Christmas wishes to everyone and have a happy, healthy and prosperous 2021.

What is Happening in the Local Property Market - Dec 2020
By Voss Homes Estate Agents - Huércal Overa
**The Adventures of Neila**

22. Species Recognition and Macaroni Cheese

Kevin took my paper from me, ran his fingers over it and handed it back to me.

‘What is it, and what should I do with it?’ I asked.

‘It’s a Species Recognition slip.’

‘Yes, I know. But what must I do with it?’

‘It entitles you to an appropriate body. You need an appropriate body, you can’t go about looking like an alien in a Parka.’

‘But I am an alien in a Parka. And what is an appropriate body? Where will I get one?’

Kevin rolled his eyes and sighed. ‘The Body Shop, of course.’

Mrs Worsley had been listening intently. ‘Kevin, don’t tease her! The Body Shop sells make-up and suchlike. I don’t think make-up is going to help her much.’

‘No, you take her to the Body Shop, and ask for Gaylord. He’ll fit her up with a suitable body.’ He grinned at me. ‘Can’t wait to see you when you’ve been transmogrified.’

‘Transmogrified? Does it hurt?’ I didn’t like the sound of it at all.

‘No, not a bit. Better take some proper clothes with you when you go.’

‘Why?’

He grinned a bit wider. ‘Because when you get a human-sized body that Parka isn’t going to be big enough, and your bottom is going to stick out.’

Cyril snorted and blew his nose loudly. Mrs Worsley’s mouth was in a silent oooo.

‘Better wait ’til tomorrow now.’ Kevin continued. ‘The Body Shop will be closing soon, and it’s better you give yourself enough time to choose. ’Cos when you’ve chosen, that’s it. You can’t go back and change it if you don’t like it, you’re stuck with it.’

I was confused. ‘Did you choose that body, then?’

‘Neila, don’t be rude.’ Mrs Worsley remonstrated.

‘Nah, that’s all right. I used to be dark grey with six arms. Neila will tell you.’ He strolled back towards the garage workshop.

I felt both Mrs Worsley and Cyril looking hard at me.

‘Yes,’ I stammered. ‘He comes from Tixif, they are all dark grey with six arms.’

‘Well I’ll be………..’ Cyril began. ‘So he’s one too? I thought there was something strange about him. Brilliant mechanic, though.’

‘I think we’d better be getting home,’ Mrs Worsley said briskly. ‘Neila, do you like macaroni cheese?’

‘I don’t know. Is it anything like a jam sandwich?’

Cyril snorted and blew his nose again. He must have a cold.

‘No, but I think you’ll like it. Then we’ll watch the telly, see the news.’

She took my hand and we walked back to the car.

I wonder – Do I like macaroni cheese? What is an appropriate body? Has Cyril got a cold?

---

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This year has held a strange mixture of experiences for us all.

The highlights for the Inspired Team was a relaunch of the business with new investors, a move to a super new store and the introduction of many, many more new ranges of garden furniture and accessories! Your response to these changes was very positive and our sales levels told the story!

However, we have also had to cope with the difficulties and challenges presented by Covid–19 which has left us all feeling pretty isolated and anxious for our own safety and that of our communities. We hope that you and your families have remained safe during this very difficult time.

All of a sudden Christmas is almost upon us and we would like to give something back to our customers by way of a thank you for your support and loyalty throughout the past 11 months.

So, all our current stock of furniture and accessories will be reduced by 10% up until 31st December!!

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HOME AND GARDEN

THE INSPIRED TEAM

HISPANITAN

Brico Centro Lopez
It may seem a little odd to have the first of two articles about bereavement in the Christmas issue. But Christmas can be a difficult time for those who have recently lost a loved one, especially if it is the first one since their loss.

So spare a thought for those who may be facing Christmas on their own for the first time, though it is a time when we all remember those Christmasses, perhaps long past, that we shared with those we once loved and will love forever.

This year has been especially difficult for those who have lost loved ones. Many have lost family in the UK and were unable to go back for the funeral whilst others were prevented from having loved ones from the UK around them whilst they grieved here.

Before we go any further may I say that this article is not about the practicalities we have to deal with when someone dies. CAT Services is a good starting point for those issues.

Bereavement is something we all have to face in our lifetime, usually many times, depending on the sizes of our families and friendship circles. Each experience will be unique and the depth of grief we feel will depend on many factors. None of us will have exactly the same experience twice and no two people will cope with the death of a loved one in the same way. It is important that we remember this, that they, “should have got over it by now!” Nor, “you got over him/her quickly!”

So whilst there are a number of established stages of bereavement we will all pass through them at different speeds and in some cases will take them in a different order or maybe miss some out altogether.

Neither are they “discrete”, there is considerable overlap across two or more stages, indeed we may seem to suffer most of the stages at roughly the same time, we may even go back and revisit earlier or more stages, indeed we may seem to suffer most of the stages we will all pass through at different speeds and in some cases will take them in a different order or maybe miss some out altogether.

Neither are they “discrete”, there is considerable overlap across two or more stages, indeed we may seem to suffer most of the stages at roughly the same time, we may even go back and revisit earlier stages. Some, particularly those who lose a partner late in life, may never complete all the stages. My mother-in-law simply spent her remaining years just longing for the day when she and her husband would be together again.

We may have to face up to the loss of loved ones at any stage in our lives and it is probably true that our grief is proportional to the closeness of the relationship with the deceased. However, many of the readers of this magazine are all “of an age” where the most common loss is that of our husband or wife. Perhaps only the loss of a child is comparable if not worse, probably even more so for the mother; that is, thankfully, a cross I have not had to bear.

Research conducted in the US suggests that women tend to cope better with the loss of a husband than a man who loses his wife, particularly at a practical level. They are also better equipped at an emotional level. Partly because women form wider and deeper friendships with other women than men do with their mates. Leaning on the bar discussing Man U’s performance against Chelsea (other teams are available!) does not equip them for the emotional upheaval that bereavement brings!

Women’s grief is probably deeper than that of men’s and, statistically, they grieve for longer. But as we only ever get to experience it from one standpoint we can never really know. So whilst bereavement stages are common to all types of loss (not just death, I might add) we will focus more, but not exclusively, on the loss of a partner.

The first stage is shock. This is true whether your partner has been taken from you suddenly, e.g. an accident or sudden heart attack, or if you have watched them suffer over many months and in the end it has come as a “blessed relief” as some people put it. We all suffer it, if you have watched them suffer over many months and in the end it has come as a “blessed relief” as some people put it. We all suffer it, however much we may have seen it coming, for nearly everyone I have spoken to said that a part of them believed that their loved one would recover, however dire the signs.

Some people pass through this stage quickly, others take a bit longer. This denial, numbness phase is usually the one they are in at the time of the funeral (especially here in Spain).

Because they seem to be coping so well we can fall into the trap of assuming they “should have got over it by now!” That is, thankfully, a cross I have not had to bear.

Continued on page 50......
Secondly, we have to deal with the gut-wrenching emotion of the loss where our feelings are all over the place, we cry at anything and everything. It’s a bit like the Dionne Warwick song, “There’s always something there to remind me...” Crying is good. The problem for men is that our culture tends to see it as a weakness for them to cry. My grandfather cried for about 10 seconds when we told him grandma had died, it was the only time I ever saw him cry. Not crying can make it much more difficult to pass through the grieving process. Those who try to bottle up their emotions generally take much longer to navigate this stage.

So far we have touched on the initial shock, denial and numbness, passed on to a stage of tearful, emotional upheaval and now we find ourselves in a state of loneliness and depression. Unfortunately, it is quite common to be in a room full of people we know and who care for us and suddenly have the overwhelming feeling of being totally alone. This can be a particularly difficult time when we have to force ourselves to perform the most basic of daily tasks of eating, keeping the house tidy, keeping ourselves and our clothes clean. Some people have difficulty getting out of bed, whilst others don’t even bother going to bed. We need to develop a routine, however basic, which ensures we and our surroundings remain clean and healthy. Many people like to have the radio or music playing in the background to try and cover the sound of silence. It is perhaps not a good idea to have the TV on too much during the day as we can end up gradually sinking into a life of lethargy. On the other hand, it is OK to watch the tele whilst doing something else, like the ironing!%

Crying is good. The problem for men is that our culture tends to see it as a weakness for them to cry. My grandfather cried for about 10 seconds when we told him grandma had died, it was the only time I ever saw him cry. Not crying can make it much more difficult to pass through the grieving process. Those who try to bottle up their emotions generally take much longer to navigate this stage.

Some people have difficulty getting out of bed, whilst others don’t even bother going to bed. We need to develop a routine, however basic, which ensures we and our surroundings remain clean and healthy. Many people like to have the radio or music playing in the background to try and cover the sound of silence. It is perhaps not a good idea to have the TV on too much during the day as we can end up gradually sinking into a life of lethargy. On the other hand, it is OK to watch the tele whilst doing something else, like the ironing! It can be tempting to use alcohol, drugs or even food as a way of coping with our feelings. Needless to say, this may provide a very temporary respite but it is not a long-term solution. However, if we’ve always had a glass of wine with our dinner that needn’t change. Just don’t let the glass become a bottle.

Our friends and family are important. They need to watch out for signs of self-neglect or over-dependence and intervene where appropriate. This is where support is important. Someone told me once that in the first days after the loss of his wife there was a constant stream of well-wishers bearing hot-pots and lasagnes, but when things started to go pear-shaped they were nowhere to be seen. Many years ago when I was taking my turn as a parent helper at the playgroup a favourite action rhyme was “We’re all going on a bear hunt, we’re not scared”.

Along the way they encounter a number of obstacles and each is responded to with the chorus, “You can’t go over it, You can’t go under it, You can’t go around it, You have to go through it.” Finally, they encounter the bear and run home scared! This taught them, and teaches us that it is OK to be frightened about a great many situations that we may now find ourselves in and that we have to work our way through the stages of bereavement, there is no way around them.

Unfortunately, there are still more stages to pass through and now we must move from a stage of loneliness and depression to a stage where the bereaved is likely to suffer one or more of a whole range of physical symptoms. We may not suffer all of them but it is almost certain that we will succumb to some of them. Many are opposite sides of the same coin, for example, some people will suffer from insomnia whilst others will have difficulty waking up. Some may even go from one extreme to the other.

Amongst the physical symptoms we are likely to experience are feeling physically drained, lethargic with no energy, tightness of muscles or an inability to sit still. We may experience a loss of libido, which is probably not an issue when we have lost a partner. It is possibly not an issue with the loss of a child, but where the loss may be felt more by one partner than the other this could become a bone of contention, e.g. the wife loses her mother and is likely to grieve more than her husband whose feelings towards his mother-in-law might not be so strong!

Many of us will suffer from digestive problems, severe headaches and generally become more susceptible to illnesses. Grief uses up large amounts of energy, both emotional and physical, this is possibly a reason we often lose weight at this time. Therefore, it is important that we eat a sensible, balanced diet.

Continued on page 52.....
There are seven species of sea turtles in the world:

- Loggerhead
- Green
- Leatherback
- Hawksbill
- Kemp’s Ridley
- Olive Ridley
- Flatback

Of these, five have been observed in Spanish waters. The two that have chosen not to honour us with their presence are the olive Ridley and the flatback.

All turtles are migratory creatures who use Spanish waters for foraging, growing up – or even just to pass through on their long transoceanic journeys. But sometimes they also approach our coasts to lay their eggs.

All turtles are endangered species due to numerous human factors: pollution and eradication of their habitats – including coasts/islands for laying; fishing, which causes them to get caught up in nets, and illegal international trafficking in turtles or products derived from them. The turtle most frequently encountered in Spanish waters is the loggerhead turtle, but the leatherback and the green turtles are also frequent visitors.

Although the green turtle does not lay in Spain, its young ones spend time around the Canary Islands. As they grow up, they change their colour which starts off as grey and slowly changes to become the dark olive green the adults sport.

The ‘green’ in ‘green turtle’ does not actually refer to the colour of their skin and shell, but to the fact that their body fat is bright green – probably a result of their seagrass and algae diet.

Adult green turtles are a rare sight in Spanish waters; the leatherback is more frequent. It is a very large turtle, and it is named for its leathery shell which comprises a mosaic of small bones covered by firm, rubbery skin with seven longitudinal ridges or ‘keels’.

The leatherback turtle is a great lover of jellyfish and other gelatinous delights. It finds it food in the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, from the Canary Islands to Cantabria and even Great Britain and Scandinavia.

Leatherback turtles share their time between tropical waters where they reproduce, and very cold waters where they find their favourite food.

Hawksbill and Kemp’s Ridley turtles are rarely, though occasionally, spotted in Spanish waters when passing by on their busy itinerary.

The most common of turtles in Spanish waters is undoubtedly the loggerhead turtle.

Although it rarely used to lay its eggs on our beaches, there has been an increase in incidences over the last few years, a change scientists put down to the increase in water temperatures caused by global warming. The loggerhead turtle is the largest of all the hard-shelled sea turtles. It grows up to 120 cm long and can weigh up to 140 kilos. These turtles are long-lived and can live to 70-80 years or more. The female reaches sexual maturity at about 35 years of age.

The mating season goes from March to June, and the females are able to store sperm from several different males inside her until ovulation in June and July.

The females lay 4 to 9 lots of eggs with a couple of weeks between each. They then have a resting period of 2.3 years before mating again.

The gender of sea turtles is determined by the temperature of the sand during the incubation period. If it is above 29ºC the baby turtle is more likely to come out female.

The newly hatched turtles are extremely vulnerable, and as soon as they are out of their eggs, they use the light of the moon to direct them to the sea. Many perish in this process and also in their early days in the sea.

Once they reach maturity their only natural enemies are sharks. Loggerhead turtles are omnivores. Their beaks are made from horn. The beaks are hard with strong muscles and together with downward pointed horn spikes in the turtles’ ephipagus, break down the hard parts of the loggerhead turtles’ diet, which consists of shellfish, snails, crustacea, fish and sea plants.

There are two practically genetically isolated populations: the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Their migration in the Atlantic has not been mapped accurately, but Mediterranean loggerhead turtles have been seen in Florida, Nicaragua and Cuba. Migration in the Mediterranean Sea is a little clearer as the turtles follow the mapped out sea currents. They tend to stay where the water is warmer, although they can turn down their metabolism if need be and stay underwater for hours and only rise up to breathe every so often if they get caught out by the cold.

There is one aspect of moving forward into a new future that some of us have to come to terms with. This is the memory of our loved one. This is still worth living. We need have no recriminations; it is a natural life we live within it will be different. There will still be times of preoccupation with the deceased. This is quite normal, but we must be careful not to let our memories of things that are out of our control. When my father lay dying my mother spent virtually every moment at his bedside. A friend came to the door and my mother went to let her in, and in that moment my father died. She never really forgave herself for that lapse, always worrying that she might have woken in the night and I was not there to talk with her. If these feelings of guilt are allowed to overwhelm us then we will never work through our grief. Hopefully family and friends can help us to get things into perspective, if not we may need to seek professional help.

Another feeling we might have is anger and this could be directed at any one, or several people. It might be at the deceased for not having done enough to help. Another feeling we might have is guilt and this could be directed at God for allowing at any one, or several people. It might be at the deceased for leaving

But we must be careful not to keep ourselves up over things that

One important aspect of our relationship with our friends and family is to allow us to talk freely about our loss, for we cannot move forward without also allowing ourselves to look back. Like the rear-view mirror in our car, we may be keeping our main focus on the road ahead but we must always be aware of what’s behind us. As we move forward we realise that our wounds are starting to heal, there are still scars which will slowly fade but probably never completely disappear. We will begin to enjoy life again and that will start a new surge of guilt, how dare we laugh

But, make no mistake, this is a new life, there will be similarities

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Biotin

Vitamin H, more commonly known as biotin, is part of the B complex group of vitamins. All B vitamins help the body to convert food (carbohydrates) into fuel (glucose), which is used to produce energy. These B vitamins, often referred to as B complex vitamins, also help the body metabolize fats and protein. B complex vitamins are needed for healthy skin, hair, eyes, and liver. They also help the nervous system function properly.

Your body needs biotin to metabolize carbohydrates, fats, and amino acids, the building blocks of protein. Biotin is often recommended for strengthening hair and nails, and it’s found in many cosmetic products for hair and skin.

Like all B vitamins, it is a water soluble, meaning the body does not store it. However, bacteria in the intestine can make biotin. It is also available in small amounts in a number of foods. Biotin is also important for normal embryonic growth, making it a critical nutrient during pregnancy.

It’s rare to be deficient in biotin. Symptoms include hair loss, dry scaly skin, cracking in the corners of the mouth (called cheilitis), swollen and painful tongue that is magenta in color (glossitis), dry eyes, loss of appetite, fatigue, insomnia, and depression. People who have been on parenteral nutrition – nutrition given intravenously – for a long period of time, those taking antiseizure medication or antibiotics long-term, and people with conditions like Crohn’s disease that make it hard to absorb nutrients, are more likely to be deficient in biotin.

There are not many good quality studies evaluating biotin. Many of its proposed uses are based on weak evidence or case reports:

**Hair and Nail Problems**

Very weak evidence suggests that biotin supplements may improve thin, splitting, or brittle toe and fingernails, as well as hair. Biotin, combined with zinc and topical clobetasol propionate, has also been used to combat alopecia areata in both children and adults.

**Cradle Cap (Seborrheic Dermatitis)**

Infants who don’t have enough biotin often develop this scaly scalp condition. However, no studies have shown that biotin supplements – given in formula or breast milk – effectively treat cradle cap.

Always ask your doctor before taking any vitamin, herb, or supplement if you are breastfeeding.

Continued on page 56 .....
Food-processing techniques can destroy biotin. Less-processed Raw egg whites contain a protein called Avidin that interferes with grains; cauliflower; bananas; and mushrooms.

Biotin can be found in brewer’s yeast; cooked eggs, especially egg yolk; sardines; nuts (almonds, peanuts, pecans, walnuts) and nut butters; soybeans; other legumes (beans, blackeye peas); whole butters; and chromium might improve blood sugar control in some people with type 2 diabetes, but biotin alone doesn’t seem to have the same effect. More research is needed to determine whether biotin has any benefit.

Peripheral Neuropathy

There have been reports that biotin supplements improve the symptoms of peripheral neuropathy for some people who developed this condition from either diabetes or ongoing dialysis for kidney failure. Peripheral neuropathy is nerve damage in the feet, hands, legs, or arms. Numbness, tingling, burning or strange sensations, pain, muscle weakness, and trouble walking are some symptoms. However, there aren’t any studies that evaluate whether biotin really helps treat peripheral neuropathy.

Dietary Sources

Biotin can be found in brewer’s yeast; cooked eggs, especially egg yolks; sardines; nuts (almonds, peanuts, pecans, walnuts) and nut butters; soybeans; other legumes (beans, blackeye peas); whole grains; cauliflower; bananas; and mushrooms. Raw egg whites contain a protein called Avidin that interferes with the body’s absorption of biotin.

Food-processing techniques can destroy biotin. Less-processed versions of the foods listed above contain more biotin.

Available Forms

Biotin is available in multivitamins and B-vitamin complexes, and as individual supplements. Standard preparations are available in 10 mcg, 50 mcg, and 100 mcg tablets and contain either simple biotin or a complex with brewer’s yeast.

Precautions

Because of the potential for side effects and interactions with medications, you should take dietary supplements only under the supervision of a knowledgeable health care provider. Nevertheless, biotin has not been associated with side effects, even in high doses, and is considered to be nontoxic.

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Drinking alcohol, especially too much, can be accompanied by various side effects. A hangover is the most common one and while there’s no shortage of purported hangover cures, ranging from chugging a glass of pickle juice to rubbing a lemon in your armpit before drinking, few of them are backed by science.

Let’s look at a few easy, evidence-based ways to cure a hangover.

Eat a good breakfast
Eating a hearty breakfast is one of the most well-known remedies for a hangover. One reason is that a good breakfast can help maintain your blood sugar levels. Although low blood sugar levels are not necessarily the cause of a hangover, they’re often associated with it. Low blood sugar could also contribute to some hangover symptoms, such as nausea, fatigue and weakness. In fact, some studies also show that maintaining adequate blood sugar could mitigate some of the bodily changes that occur with alcohol consumption, such as the buildup of acid in the blood. In addition to helping reduce certain hangover symptoms, eating a healthy breakfast can provide important vitamins and minerals, which may become depleted with excessive alcohol intake.

Get plenty of sleep
Alcohol can cause sleep disturbances and may be associated with decreased sleep quality and duration for some individuals. Though low to moderate amounts of alcohol may initially promote sleep, studies show that higher amounts and chronic use can ultimately disrupt sleep patterns. While a lack of sleep does not cause a hangover, it can make your hangover worse.

Stay hydrated
Drinking alcohol can lead to dehydration in a few different ways. First, alcohol has a diuretic effect. This means that it increases the production of urine, leading to a loss of fluids and electrolytes that are needed for normal functioning. Second, excessive amounts of alcohol can cause vomiting, leading to an even further loss of fluids and electrolytes. Although dehydration is not the only cause of a hangover, it contributes to many of its symptoms, such as increased thirst, fatigue, headache and dizziness. When drinking alcohol, a good rule of thumb is to alternate between a glass of water and a drink. Though this won’t necessarily prevent dehydration, it can help you moderate your alcohol intake.

Have a drink the next morning
Also known as “hair of the dog,” many people swear by this common hangover remedy. Though it’s largely based on myth and anecdotal evidence, there is some evidence to support that having a drink the next morning can lessen hangover symptoms. This is because alcohol changes the way that methanol, a chemical found in small amounts in alcoholic beverages, is processed in the body.
Winter Beauty Tips for Your Skin, Hair and Lips

Winter is here! I love this time of the year, when there is a nip in the air. But the season can also play havoc with your skin, leading to dry, flaky skin and chapped lips, if adequate care is not taken. This becomes especially important for young brides, whose weddings are right around the corner. Here are a few tips that will help you keep your skin hydrated and glowing throughout the season.

Dry skin suffers more than oily skin so if you have dry skin, you should follow these tips more religiously. However, the following measures are helpful for all types of skin.

Watch Your Diet
Your skin texture depends not only on external treatments, but also on your food intake. A proper nutritious intake helps in rejuvenating the skin from within. Water is essential for our body and a good intake of 3-4 litres daily should be maintained by all. This helps in retaining the moisture of your skin as well as keeping skin disorders at bay. Fruits and vegetables in your daily diet release a lot of water into your system. Primrose syrup / capsules and olive oil in your diet aid in softening the skin.

Moisturise Daily
Cold weather and cool winds aggravate dry skin condition. Moisturisers and cold creams are a must during winters. Tone and moisture after each cleansing to preserve and replenish the moisture in your skin. Use a moisturising night cream every evening. Apply a daytime moisturiser around your eyes and on dry areas each morning.

Use the paste of ground green gram powder instead of soap to work back inside as it’s known that extreme temperature changes can burst capillaries near the skin's surface. Add a few drops of oil to the water that you are using to bathe. This will help retain the moisture lost when bathing. In fact, going for a pre-bath warm oil self-massage, called abhyanga, is highly recommended. Avoid using very hot water during winter as it can decrease the natural oils of your skin. Instead shorten your bath time.

Include Flaxseeds, Almonds and Ghee. Although it doesn't necessarily taste fabulous, flaxseed oil can moisturise your body from the inside. Since it is rich in vital fatty acids, it can do a lot for your overall health. It is available in oil form as well as in capsule form.

Give your skin lipid support from within by including soaked and blanched almonds, soaked walnuts, whole milk, fresh cheese, and ghee (clarified butter) in your diet which will definitely add wonders to your skin.

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Oil Therapy
Pamper your skin with a little coconut oil before a bath to heal dryness and chaps. Use a creamy soap that renders that extra suppleness to your skin.

Wait 30 minutes after bathing, or washing your face, before going out into frigid air. Splash your face with cool water when you come back inside as it’s known that extreme temperature changes can burst capillaries near the skin's surface.

Add a few drops of oil to the water that you are using to bathe. This will help retain the moisture lost when bathing. In fact, going for a pre-bath warm oil self-massage, called abhyanga, is highly recommended. Avoid using very hot water during winter as it can decrease the natural oils of your skin. Instead shorten your bath time.

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By Vic Davey

Well, what a year we have had, and it is not over yet. As our thoughts turn to the rapidly approaching Christmas Holiday season, I fear the rush will be a little bit of a return this year for many people. No one knows what the next few weeks will bring us, let alone whether Santa will be allowed out and about or be confined to the North Pole…..difficult to social distance the Elves and Reindeer I would have thought too! Many of us wondering how and when it will all end…….

A while ago I wrote a piece on the Spanish flu epidemic in 1918 which swept across the globe in a very short time and accounted for between 50 to 100 million deaths. The Covid pandemic and its effect has clear parallels with the Spanish flu. Certainly, many people of my generation are fearful, especially those who are considered “at risk” from existing health issues.

In 1918, of course, there was little or no treatment, no track and trace and certainly no vaccine on the horizon. It was quickly understood that crowds could cause transmission. Lockdowns were introduced as well as the closure of theatres, schools and borders and the wearing of masks. Hygiene measures were initiated, disinfection of public places and also quarantining for infected people.

In Zamora, in defiance of the Authorities, the Bishop called for a Mass, and the authorities in Madrid did not cancel the San Isidro celebrations, leading to parties and the gathering of large numbers of people enjoying Fiestas during May 1918. Consequently a week later, large numbers of infections were reported. The second wave of my generation are fearful, especially those who are considered “at risk” from existing health issues.

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in September was more devastating than the first. This coincided with harvest celebrations along with the relaxation of lockdown measures. It is almost like history repeating itself……

So, what happened to Spanish flu, how did it die out? Apparently, in some parts, it lasted into the early 1920s although, to all intents and purposes, 1920 was when, according to the experts, society ended up with a kind of collective immunity and numbers dwindled. However, unlike Covid, it affected mostly young people who had not developed immunity, unlike older generations who had lived through previous epidemics.

The Spanish flu virus did not die out altogether though but instead mutated. According to Dr Benito Almirante, Head of infectious diseases at the Vall d’Hebron Hospital in Barcelona, “Traces of the Spanish flu virus have been found in other flu viruses. It continued to appear, mutating and acquiring genetic material from other viruses.”

Perhaps it might be useful to get some perspective on what we are suffering now. Sadly, worldwide there have been just under 1.4 million deaths from Covid. In Spain, it is a little over 42,000 and for the UK, just under 54,000.

However, compare that with Spanish flu when Worldwide there were in excess of 50 million fatalities, in Spain, around 260,000 died and in the UK, 228,000. So Covid, although devastating, appears to be under better control.

Since its peak in 1998, some 33 million have perished with AIDS or AIDS related illnesses and the EBOLA virus 2014 to 2016 which affected mostly West Africa, accounted for 11,300 deaths.

These numbers are little comfort to those who are ill from Covid or have friends or family who have died, but for those of us shielding, following the guidelines and doing our best to protect ourselves, things are better and will improve, but it will take time. Someone wise once said “There are few problems in life which can defeat a Sunrise or Christmas”. Let’s hope he is right.

So on that note…Best wishes to you all for Christmas and the New Year……and Stay Safe!!

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Are you suffering from Maskne?

Maskne is the latest skin problem — here’s how to prevent or get rid of it.

Health experts agree that wearing a mask is one of the healthiest and most responsible things we can do during the COVID-19 pandemic. After all, donning a face covering in public helps stop respiratory droplets from folks possibly infected with the disease from being inhaled into the air where they can be inhaled by healthy people.

But with this necessary safety step, a new skin issue is, well, popping up. "Maskne." The name is pretty self-explanatory, acne caused by wearing a mask. While you may be surprised by the skin irritation, there are measures you can take to prevent or treat it to get your clear skin back.

Maskne is the result of a perfect storm of factors that cause acne. It’s distressing to start seeing spots pop up on your face again. "Masks can lead to acne breakouts for two main reasons. Direct friction promotes inflammation, which drives breakouts. Masks also promote breakouts indirectly by trapping moisture and allowing for overgrowth of microorganisms on the skin. When it comes to the first issue, friction, this is called "acne mechanics." It’s a common problem among athletes. Active bodies are hot, sweaty bodies, and that increase in heat and moisture, combined with the rubbing of sports equipment or clothes on skin, creates an environment for acne to thrive."

You know you might have maskne if these breakouts appear near the edges of the mask where the shield touches the skin and throughout the areas covered by the mask.

Red spots and bumps along your mask line are potential signs of "maskne." Don’t wear a mask during the COVID-19 pandemic; instead, follow these tips.

Skin-Care Tips That Can Help Prevent Maskne

Basic skin-care habits, such as washing your face morning and night with a gentle cleanser. Look for one that’s oil, fragrance, and sulfate-free. Apply a lightweight moisturizer (look for those that are more lotion-like than creamy) on top. If you are wearing the mask for a long period of time, avoid applying makeup in the mask area, too. No one can see that area, anyway.

When possible, keep your mask off your face to give yourself a break. Remember to do this only if law (and responsible public health practices) allow, for example: If you’re in your car or home by yourself or with members of your household, you do not have to wear a mask.

In the evening, consider applying a clay mask if your complexion is coming on — that familiar feeling of something hurting under your skin — try putting on a pimple patch. These are thin hydrocolloid bandages that can be applied to impending breakouts. No one will see them under a mask anyway.

Don’t keep people in the dark

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Your maskne treatment strategy needs to involve some patience. In a rush to get clear skin fast, people tend to go crazy with scrubs and face washes. A cleanser with salicylic acid will work to unplug pores. If you need a spot treatment, reach for a benzoyl peroxide cream with 2.5 to 5 percent concentration or smoothening on an oil and fragrance-free moisturizer that contains hydrating ceramides. A light serum with hyaluronic acid can furthermore boost moisture for any skin type, including those with acne. Finally, you’ll still want to wear a sunscreen when going out, and in this case, a mineral SPF can even help soothe your skin from irritation. Try looking for one with the active ingredient zinc oxide. Zinc oxide provides UV protection and actually has some skin soothing benefits, which is why it’s used for babies as a diaper cream. With a little time and care, maskne doesn’t have to be inevitable.

Taylors of Mojacar

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The Best Mask Material to Keep Acne at Bay

People in healthcare settings likely won’t have the choice of what type of mask they wear on the job. But if you have a choice and are going out in the community, then you have the opportunity to wear a mask made from a material that’s gentler on skin and won’t trap excess heat. That’s a 100 percent cotton mask, which is the most breathable. Wash your mask daily to remove residue from sunscreen, skincare products, and makeup, as these can clog pores.

If you are wearing disposable masks, replacing them as frequently as you can is important. Also, to alleviate some of the rubbing and friction, place silicon strips under the mask’s pressure points.
For many of us, Christmas is the Most wonderful Time of the Year. And in order to fit it to be so for all the members of your family, make sure that Man is Dog’s Best Friend as well, and remember to keep your dog’s well-being being at the front of your mind all the way through the celebrations.

Presents constitute a very large part of our Christmas celebrations, and although your dog is almost sure to enjoy a new toy as much as any child, the best present you can give him is your time and love.

As we all know, Christmas is a time for indulging, and most of us fall for the temptations constantly in front of us: Large dinners, lots of sweets and snacks and constant excuses for a toast – usually of the alcoholic varieties.

That is okay for humans, and although most of us need a quick and drastic diet in January, that becomes the end of that.

Not so our dogs. Christmas is the time of year when the vets’ emergency services are at their busiest, trying to help and even rescue dogs who have fallen victim to their owners’ misguided Christmas spirit.

Christmas is not a reason for your dog to eat lots more, or even differently. Resist those eyes (who only try it on, and do not bear a grudge if you remain strong) and do not fall for the temptation to slip a bit of turkey and sausage under the table. Imagine if every person around the table has done the same!

Also, Christmas sweets and chocolates (as well as the everyday ones) are extremely bad for dogs and can even have fatal consequences.

Many dog owners know all this and buy special dog treats; these days you can even get Christmas ones! But try not to overdo even the treats. Almost all dogs love treats, and they do not know when to stop – you are the adult, and it is up to you to be responsible.

Treats should really be used for encouraging or discouraging certain behaviours, in other words, as a reward for doing or not doing something. Giving a dog a treat for no special reason (other than you, he, or you both fancy it) can quickly lead you down the slippery slope, and you may end up with a dog that constantly begs.

Do not think that the more treats you give your dog, the more he will love you! But the more time you spend with him, train with him and play with him, the stronger a bond you will forge.

There are obviously plants and flowers all year round that can potentially harm your dog, but be especially careful with your poinsettia. Poinsettias with their beautiful, intense colours are an integral part of Christmas, and it is hard to resist them when they are pushed in our faces wherever we go.

And indeed, you need not abstain; just try to make sure you leave them out of reach of your dog, as their ingestion can seriously affect their mouth and esophagus and cause vomiting and diarrhea.

Christmas is also a season for socialising, and even though we probably won’t be allowed to have large gatherings of people this year, even six Christmas merry adults and a few kids can make a lot of noise.

Lots of dogs love people and are happy and confident around friends as well as strangers, but many others feel insecure when the usual balance in their home suddenly changes, and it is full of strange sounds and smells. And mum and dad don’t behave like they usually do! If your dog belongs to the latter category, make sure your guests know how to behave around him and provide him with a safe and quiet place to retire to if it all gets too much for him.

Some dogs get over excited when there are visitors in the house, and many owners tend to just lock them away in a separate room to avoid the fuss and sometimes embarrassment. However, if your dog barks non-stop in his exile it is partly because he doesn’t know what’s going on, and it is probably a good idea to let him say hello to the visitors – maybe while on a lead – before you put him away with his bed, his favourite toy, a dog bone and a bowl of fresh water.

I hope this unusual Christmas will prove a happy one for both our readers and their four-legged friends; if you follow some of the advice above, you will achieve at least some happiness and harmony for everybody.
Mary, did you Know?  
By Donna Walker

“Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?  
Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?  
Did you know that your Baby Boy has walked where angels trod?  
When you kiss your little Baby, you kissed the face of God?  

“Mary, did you know?”

Andy and I had been listening to the vocal band Pentatonix singing their version of what has now become a popular Christmas song, “Mary did you know?” On a chilly winter’s evening we were trying to imagine how Mary might have answered the song’s title:

1. “Oh p...lease!” (Total Exasperation. Withering look. -Think Colonel Munwaring addressing Private Pike from Dad’s Army!)  
2. “Yes. I did. Actually.” (condescending. What a total idiotic question. Isn’t it obvious. Even to you?)  
3. Or maybe she just looked at the questioner and gave a half-smile. You know, a bit like that of the Mona Lisa, and thought of the words of the angel Gabriel:  

“Greetings, favoured woman! The Lord is with you.”

She’d been confused and disturbed as she tried to think what the angel could mean.  
“Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favour with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!”

Mary sighed to herself. “Yes, I did know,” she wanted to say. “Not all the details, maybe, but I did know that this would be no ordinary child. How could it be? It was hardly an ordinary conception!” And she smiled again.

“Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy would one day rule the nations?  
Did you know that your Baby Boy is Lord of all creation?  
“Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will give sight to a blind man?  
“Mary, did you know that your Baby Boy will calm the storm with His hand?  

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Using waste materials for our homemade holiday crafts is even better. It means that we aren’t producing more garbage in the course of our celebration, nor are we spending money to buy Christmas decorations we could easily make ourselves. From an environmental perspective, the following homemade Christmas decor ideas help us demonstrate our respect for the planet. Rather than treating its resources as if they’re disposable, we’re upcycling them to create something perfectly in the spirit of the season.

When we give our DIY Christmas crafts as gifts, it means that much more, because it comes from our hearts and minds rather than some big super store, and if we’re being honest, isn’t it just as important that the process of making these Christmas crafts is just plain fun, and fills our holidays with joy?  

The most treasured ornaments are usually those that come with personal memories attached. Whether it’s a photo of baby’s first Christmas, a casting mould someone made at nursery, or a project from high school art class, these snapshots in time often become family heirlooms. These time-honoured traditions don’t have to stop just because the kids have grown up. Making DIY Christmas ornaments together as a family is fun, free, and full of home grown holiday cheer. There are a host of things that most of us already have around the house that you can use to make recycled Christmas ornaments. Scrap old light bulbs can be quickly converted into glass baubles. Old lids from jars or bottles can be painted and transformed into ornaments. Cookie cutters, puzzle pieces, and board game parts that probably haven’t seen the light of day in years can all make cool Christmas ornaments. Even old light bulbs can be quickly converted into glass baubles.

Continued on page 70 .....
Once your homemade snow globe looks just the way you want it to, simply screw the lid back on and glue it to keep it shut permanently. Then turn it over and watch the snow swirl!

This is a perfect way to use up old ornaments or recycle Christmas decorations from the past. It breathes some new life into them and transports them to a winter wonderland. Use a hot glue gun to affix the ornament(s) artfully to the lid, and then fill the snow globe with your creation to complete the festive look.

Also, try gluing a big collection of corks together into three circles—one for the head and another for the body. The easiest way to create wine cork Reindeer is to use two corks—one for the head and another for the body. Then use two multi-pronged twigs to work as antlers, four single-pronged twigs to work as legs, one to be the neck, and another short one for the tail. Some folks also like to add a tuft of red at the nose or a jingle bell collar.

Other wine cork Christmas crafts include painting the cork like Santa, adding colourful accoutrements—cotton buds, buttons, etc.—to complete the festive look.

Once the bottle is decorated, it can also be adorned with things: a letter (or word) on each bottle to spell out something. “Joy” and “Noel” are classics for this. Paint it. Red, green, white, silver all seem fitting colours for the holiday. Or drink several bottles of wine and have one of each colour!

Put a letter (or word) on each bottle to spell out something. “Joy” and “Noel” are classics for this. Convert the bottles into a holiday character by painting them a solid colour and embellishing that with a belt (Santa), buttons (snowman), or jingle bells (reindeer).

Once the bottle is decorated, it can also be adorned with things:

- Bare twigs interspersed with sprigs of red berries look festive, sticking out of the top. Branches of holly or conifer work well when careening out of the top.
- The bottles can be given little top hats, or beanies and a scarf.
- Use the wine bottle to hold a candle in your favourite colour.

This kind of holiday centrepiece definitely ties the room together, and it’s the sort of detail that moves the table from feeling humdrum to festive.

And it’s the sort of detail that moves the table from feeling humdrum to festive.

Christmas decoration to serve as a centrepiece for the feast?

With friends and/or family coming to visit, (following Covid 19 guide lines of course!) most of us will undoubtedly serve (and/or drink) a few glasses of wine to add extra holiday cheer. This will likely leave at least one empty wine bottle lying around.

Wine bottles are a versatile recycling material for making Christmas decorations. They stand tall and proud, already have an attractive shape, and can hold things inside like a vase. Here are some cool options for what to do with the wine bottle itself:

- Paint it. Red, green, white, silver all seem fitting colours for the holiday. Or drink several bottles of wine and have one of each colour!
- Put a letter (or word) on each bottle to spell out something. “Joy” and “Noel” are classics for this.
- Convert the bottles into a holiday character by painting them a solid colour and embellishing that with a belt (Santa), buttons (snowman), or jingle bells (reindeer).

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and finally.....

HOW TO MAKE SHEET MUSIC ANGELS

There are many different ways to make Sheet Music Angels, which you can hang on your tree or give as homemade Christmas gifts to your friends and family.

- Take one piece of sheet music (you get bonus points if it’s for a traditional Christmas song!) and fold it back and forth in accordion-like pleats.
- Hold the folded sheet music on its side while tying a thin, 12-inch piece of string around it approximately two-thirds of the way down.
- On the larger portion of the sheet music, use scissors to cut out small diamonds or other shapes, like you would when making a cut paper snowflake.
- Cut a wedge in the edge of the sheet music to make a decorative fringe-like edge for your angel’s dress.
- Take the shorter portion of the sheet music and cut it down the middle to make two wings.
- Pull the ends of the string through the middle of the wings. Thread it through a bead for the head and a button for the halo, then make a knot to secure it.
- Use any remaining string to make a loop so that you can hang your angel on a Christmas Tree… or anywhere that needs a little holiday magic!
Season’s Greetings to you all!
The season of Shale is upon us and although it is unlikely this year that we will be belting out Noddy Holder’s seasonal favourite at a karaoke evening, there are still ways in which we can enjoy a bit of festive cheer at home and maybe even share it with our loved ones.

For those of you that love a good old cheesy Christmas song, there are several options; Spotify users will be able to listen to seasonal playlists.

For those of you not in the know, Spotify is a subscription-based music streaming service that allows the user to play any song from Spotify’s library of 50 million songs. It’s current cost is €9.99 per month. It varies from it’s main competitor (Apple Music, also €9.99 per month) in that it is community-based. You can publish playlists so that others can listen in.

The main benefit is that if you are stuck for ideas, someone else has very likely already done it. Just click and enjoy!

The Apps are available for both Android and iOS as well as PC and Mac.

Fear not if you do not have a music streaming service! There are several dedicated online Christmas stations as well. Ireland’s Christmas FM offers a proper DJ (as well as ads) and accuradio.com is a viable alternative that offers a wide variety of music.

You may be able to find other options in the App stores.

One of the MOST useful websites I have ever encountered is the Norad Santa Tracker page. Links to the American Military aside, not only is this a fun diversion for Christmas Eve but has proved itself to be an invaluable tool for getting hyperactive children to bed on that special evening, when they really don’t want to go.

You can leave the web page open and it will tell you whereabouts the Man In Red is delivering in real time.

NORAD has been tracking Santa since 1955 when a young child accidently dialled the unlisted phone number of the Continental Air Defence Command (CONAD) Operations Centre in Colorado Springs, Colorado, believing she was calling Santa Claus after seeing a promotion in a local newspaper.

The Officer in charge realised the mistake and assured the youngster that Santa would have a safe journey and a tradition was born. This was taken over by NORAD in 1958. Google, never one to let everyone else have the fun, has its own snazzy version: Google Santa Tracker, which has been in operation since 2004. Both are available to download from App stores for mobile and tablets.

If you are looking for the ‘true’ meaning of Christmas, take a look at the St Nicholas Center web page for everything ‘Saint Nick’; history, recipes, crafts and how St Nicholas is ‘properly’ celebrated around the World.

Whychristmas.com is another option, offering a more light-hearted and secular approach. We are all familiar with the man in the red and white suit but did you know that the real Saint Nicholas was born in Greece in 280 A.D. and was, by all accounts a staunch defender of the Christian Faith against the Roman Empire.

Many stories abound regarding his philanthropic endeavours, most centering around his concern for children and their well-being.

We are all familiar with the accepted version of Jolly Santa which was honed by the Coca-Cola Company in the 1920’s and 1930’s as a marketing campaign.

You may bemoan the pillaging of a Saint’s reputation to sell soft drinks but before this, St. Nicholas had been a contentious figure and was considered a troublemaker by Stalin, amongst others throughout history. Regardless of where you stand on this issue, today’s Jolly red Santa is a much less controversial and divisive character than his historical counterpart.

Nowadays we are all interconnected with Facebook, email, WhatsApp and other messaging services and no doubt we will all be chatting to our distant nearest and dearest.

Those of us that like to send Christmas cards may be concerned about it getting there, especially given current circumstances. E-cards have been a viable alternative for some time and there are several options offered by companies such as Moonpig and Hallmark.

However, there are two Websites/Apps that, for me, stand out above the rest; Elf Yourself and JibJab. These two websites allow the user to create a short personalised video using a clever blend of face recognition software and pre-animated characters.

The results are highly amusing as you can populate the figures with your friends’ faces and watch them jump around the screen. The possibilities are endless.

It is possible (if you can find the images) to have Donald Trump dancing across the screen with Kim Jung Un, Vladimir Putin, Mary Berry and Boris Johnson, should you wish. It is free to try, so nothing lost there and guaranteed to get a laugh. Once finished, you can post the result to Facebook or send it via Email to your loved ones and friends Worldwide.

Please be aware that you will need to grant this web page / app access to your photos. I have been through the process and it does only obtain the necessary permissions to extract the faces. Facebook will inform you of your activity afterwards and at this point you can remove it, should you wish.

Elf Yourself and JibJab are proper websites and have been around for roughly twenty years. There is a cost involved. Subscription is available and costs between €25 - €36 per year.

I have already posted web links to the products and services listed in this article to my Tech Guru Facebook page, enjoy.

Well. That about wraps it up for this year. And what a year....

I do sincerely hope that you all enjoy Christmas and may 2021 bring the light of hope that we all desperately need.

¡Feliz Navidad!
Replacing your old TV or treating yourself to another set? Some of the points listed may be of help.

Quick summary of the technology

LCD: Liquid crystals are sandwiched between layers of glass in front of a backlit screen. Light comes from trips of tiny bright LEDs behind the screen (fluorescent tubes in the older sets). The crystals open and close allowing combinations of red, green and blue light through. Bar far the most popular and value for money.

Plasma technology is based on tiny cells, red, green and blue. When charged and discharged by a high voltage, the gas in the cells, they quickly turn to plasma, causing the fluorescent pigment (red, green and blue) to shine. Now becoming a phased out technology, very few available.

LED/OLED (organic light emitting diode) Here we have the latest technology. A very thin layer of glass containing a matrix of organic glass (carbon based). These shine bright when energised, giving a high contrast punchy picture. Larger screen sets, 50” plus are coming down in price.

Reliability

By nature of the way they work, Plasma TVs are probably the most efficient. So, from my experience LCD with LED backlights are the best of a bunch. However, failure of the LEDs is common and can sometimes be an expensive repair, depending on make of set. We will see how OLED sets fair as far as reliability as time goes on, but I would suggest if an extended warranty can be had for a small price, that would be good. A fault within the screen itself would write the set off.

Picture quality

LCD sets as said, are the most popular. We know have 4k resolution, the ability to provide a picture with more or less twice the detail of standard HD. That’s if you can get a 4K signal. Due to the LED backlighting, the image can be bright and good for rooms with high ambient light.

OLED sets give a good picture, good contrast, but by nature of the way they work, brightness is not as great and therefore more suited for the subdued living room.

Some things to think of:

• Don’t place it with the back facing a window where the sun comes in. That can add 30+ degrees to the working temperature. Don’t mount it above a hot fireplace. Smoke particles can contaminate the filters in the LCD screen and mar the image.

• Warranty. Know exactly what the warranty consists of. Do you have to take it to a repair agent (miles away), does a little man in a van come out...? Make sure it’s written down! Keep the invoice and till receipt (copy it if it’s a flimsy print out as it will fade). Keep the packing! Remember in Spain you have two years warranty. The manufacturers don’t give that to the stores, that’s why stores always try to wriggle out of that commitment. Ask for the complaints book if there’s a problem.

• It’s worth using a UPS (interruptible power supply). This will reduce mains disturbances causing possible damage to software and hardware in the set. The rating of the UPS will depend on the size of TV and or the number of appliances connected to it. I keep various UPSs in stock.

• As a rough guide, budget for about 3-5 years (depending on usage), before you have to attend a fault. You may want to factor that in.

• Think about your old analogue systems (VCRs, DVDs Games) you may want to connect to the new TV. Most new sets do not have SCART sockets and one composite video port. Adapters are available.

• Check on how the set will interface with your home cinema system / Sound bar. Will it use the HDMI connection, or optical link etc. Check it out or ask for advice.

• How many HDMI connections does the set have? Some stores sell cheap versions that have only 1 x HDMI socket, a real pain. These sets are aimed at the hotel market. A con!

• USB ports are generally available to enable you to play various types of downloaded media (dad’s down-loaded girly videos, whatever they are) Check the formats supported.

• SMART TVs. This means that the set has a connection, by either WiFi or LAN port to the internet, tablets etc. Check to see what you actually get. Most sets have license agreements with the likes of Netflix, Prime. Check what it comes pre loaded with and it’s ability to load other applications.

• I have many clients who are hard of hearing and use the headphone socket or audio out sockets to drive wireless headphone systems. Check the new TV has this facility. Also, there can be a subtle delay between the audio from the TV’s speakers and that which comes from the optical or audio ports. If husband is listening on his headphones driven by the TV, while wife is listening to the TV normally, there could be an annoying echo.

• You may find the sound quality is not what you would expect. Possibly consider a sound bar to give you better audio and bass.

• When buying a set, if it is going to be your main set, get a branded name. LG, Samsung. Spares for these brands are widely available after the warranty period and makes repairing the sets more viable. Many budget sets have well known names such as Toshiba, Philips, JVC etc made up by Vestel, Celo and other budget manufacturers. Normally good value, but you get what you pay for. For a small usage set for the bedroom, a supermarket chain branded TV will probably be ok.

• If you have lots of people wanting to sit around, check the viewing angle. Some budget sets have images that will darken, if you are not sat more or less directly in front. In my opinion, a curved set is a gimmick.

• Be very careful when unpacking the OLED TV’s. The screen assembly is thin and very fragile!

• When you have your new LCD set, nip into the PICTURE settings menu. You may find the BACKLIGHT setting is at 100%. This is to make the picture look bright and eye catching in the shop display. Reducing it to say, 60-70% will increase the life of the LED backlighting and make for less eye strain.

So, if you want any help or some advise as to what to look for, always give me a call or drop me line. The details are on the Contact Us page at the wonderful world of www.zeta-services.tv Seth Pittham.
CANT HELP YOU?
QUARTERLY ANNOUNCEMENT
25th November 2020 - provided by an Investment Product Provider extremely well known to British expats:

There is no change to net Expected Growth Rates (EGR) of the International Bond applied daily, as follows:

- Growth (Sterling) Fund: 3.3% p.a.
- Cautious (Sterling) Fund: 2.4% p.a.
- Growth (Euro) Fund: 2.4% p.a.
- Cautious (Euro) Fund: 1.6% p.a.

(notes: 1.2% p.a. more than published rates above for clients invested over 5 years)

In ADDITION to the above the following instant unit price uplifts were applied on 25th November 2020:

Growth (Sterling) Fund: 4.08%
Cautious (Sterling) Fund: 2.50%
Growth (Euro) Fund: 3.87%
Cautious (Euro) Fund: 3.15%

This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors. This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors. This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors. This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors. This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors. This was very pleasing news indeed, particularly to new investors.

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WEBSITE: www.thblacktowergroup.com

The above information was correct at the time of preparation and does not constitute investment advice and you should seek advice from a professional adviser before embarking on any financial planning activity.

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If we had had the time 2 weeks ago, it would have been perfect! Oh mud, so we are stuck again! Only every year this seems to happen. There is no way we can possibly put the nets down on the tracks. Instead, the rain started again. Not too much at first, but less than we expected. We are keeping everything crossed that it becomes possible!

The whole year has been very difficult and has affected so many people in so many ways. It seems that it could be a long time yet, before the normal we were used to returns. In fact, that normal may never come back, instead it is looking like we will be working around the ‘new’ normal for some time to come. Being a large family does have its benefits though, we are never lonely here. There is always something to do to keep us busy! It is just a shame that the ‘busy’ we would like, can’t happen due to the weather!

So as Christmas starts to creep up, time will be put to good use in the kitchen. We cannot travel to the nearest English shop for Christmas treats, so it will have to be home made. Christmas cake, homemade Marzipan and sweet mince for our mince pies are all planned. Luckily the baking cupboard is well stocked, as is the freezer, so one thing is certain, we will not starve! Off to pick some oranges now so I can make my own candied peel!

You have noticed, I mentioned pigs! Yes! Despite last month saying they were all to be collected and taken to a new home, needless to say, it never happened! With the restrictions set firmly in place the Spanish brothers due to take them were unable to get to us. So all the pigs are still here, many having uprooted fencing and running around causing mayhem. Hopefully if the restrictions are lifted over the next couple of weeks, they may be able to get to us, so we are keeping everything crossed that it becomes possible!

Boring it may be always talking about the weather, but it can have a detrimental effect on so many things here. Everything still needs to be done, and whether it is in the full heat of summer or the wet months we are currently experiencing, it makes realise that keeping animals is not for the faint hearted!

Then there are the olives to be harvested! The rain we had a few weeks back was just enough to clean all the dust from the trees. The olives were looking fat and juicy and getting close to being ready to pick. It is recommended that you don’t water the trees for around six weeks prior to harvesting, so the timing was perfect. Everything was in tip top condition. The crates were all stacked ready. The nets all neatly folded ready to lay beneath the trees, and a few days were left clear to get it all done and off to the press.

Instead, the rain started again. Not too much at first, but less than ideal. However, the rain we had last night has stopped us in our tracks. There is no way we can possibly put the nets down on the mud, so we are stuck again! Only every year this seems to happen. If we had had the time 2 weeks ago, it would have been perfect! Oh well, such is life! I can see the Christmas period being the usual mad rush it always seems to be, in fact, if it were possible, I think this year we would cancel it, but when you have children, that is not an option!

The year has been very difficult and has affected so many people in so many ways. It seems that it could be a long time yet, before the normal we were used to returns. In fact, that normal may never come back, instead it is looking like we will be working around the ‘new’ normal for some time to come. Being a large family does have its benefits though, we are never lonely here. There is always something to do to keep us busy! It is just a shame that the ‘busy’ we would like, can’t happen due to the weather!

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Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year, I can make my own candied peel!

Locally the baking cupboard is well stocked, as is the freezer, so one thing is certain, we will not starve! Off to pick some oranges now so I can make my own candied peel!

Olive Tree Farm’s diary continues......

Goes Organic
Local Family
Olive Tree Farm’s diary continues......

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Formula 1 - when fire safety works

Romain Grosjean’s escape from his fiery Formula 1 crash in Bahrain has resulted in much focus around the role that the Halo and crash structures had in saving him. But one equally crucial aspect of his survival is that Grosjean was able to emerge from around 29 seconds inside a fireball with only very light burns to his hands.

His fireproof overalls, underwear, socks, balaclava and gloves all did exactly what they were designed to do in protecting him from the flames. That success is testament to both the FIA, in introducing new tougher safety standards for driver wear in 2020, as well as the extra work that Grosjean’s racewear supplier Alpinestars has done to go over and above what is needed.

New rules
It is well known that F1 driver safety wear has to be fireproof and undergoes testing for both direct flames and heat transfer. For 2020, though, a new standard for all driver wear has been made mandatory in F1, increasing protection by around 20 per cent for many items and ensuring all items – including underwear and socks – were now tested.

The previous flame test requirements are the same – where materials are subject to a 700°C flame for 10 seconds. After that time period, the flame is removed and the material should then not burn for more than two seconds and there should be no debris, molten debris nor holes.

What has been ramped up is what is known as a Heat Transfer Index test, which effectively measures how hot things get inside a material. The machine uses a thermocouple placed in contact with the innermost layer of the garment to measure the time required for an increase of 24°C from the start point. It uses a 1000°C burner to simulate a fire.

From 2020, race suits have to resist at least 12 seconds (it was 10 seconds before). Shoes and gloves must withstand 11 seconds (with the exception of glove palms which have to withstand eight seconds).

Wishing you all a wonderful Christmas and a Happy New Year, I can make my own candied peel!

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MERRY CHRISTMAS!
Early indications are that the boot had got trapped behind something in the cockpit, potentially the brake pedal, and came off as Grosjean clambered out. While it may have seemed unusual for the boot to come off, part of the analysis going forward will be to determine whether Grosjean was helped by being able to release his foot from it. Had he not been able to, then it could potentially have trapped him in the car.

Some drivers, like Grosjean, prefer a Velcro style of fastening, whereas some like the more rigid traditional laces. What's next

The overalls and other items that Grosjean wore in the crash will now be flown back to Alpinestars’ headquarters in Italy for analysis at its laboratory.

There, the company’s scientists will hope to better understand what the overalls were put through – in terms of both heat and direct flame – and see if there are any pointers about where things can be improved in the future.

But ultimately, Alpinestars has taken huge pride in knowing that its efforts to make its products as safe as possible fully justified themselves on Sunday in Bahrain.
Economical Driving

Motoring costs rocketing? Here are some quick tips to save money: some will earn you many pounds, some just a few pennies, but they all add up.

If motoring is growing too expensive, here are some ideas on how to reduce your costs.

Buy economical tyres

Yes, the type of tyre makes a big difference. While it might be tempting to go for the cheapest available, that can prove to be a mistake in the long run. Not only do such tyres not perform as well as more expensive tyres (tests show they often increase stopping distance and have a negative effect on handling), but they may also hit your fuel economy and need replacing more regularly.

Something that not many people know to look out for is the tyre's EU tyre label. All tyres sold are fitted with one and it includes the fuel efficiency rating of the tyre. An 'A' rating means the tyre decreases the energy lost through the tyre (often referred to as ‘low rolling resistance’), while a G rating is the worst performing - resulting in increased CO2 emissions and fuel consumption. Research conducted by Which? found that a good quality ‘eco’ or ‘energy saver’ tyre could improve fuel economy by around 2.5mpg compared with the worst tyre for rolling resistance.

That could slash £50 off your yearly fuel bill, helping to offset the cost of buying good quality, premium brand tyres.

Don’t pay extra for premium fuel

You’ve probably noticed the so-called ‘premium’ fuels when filling up with petrol or diesel. The retailers claim that these fuels offer performance and economy advantages, whilst cleaning and protecting your engine. In reality, unless you’re driving a performance vehicle, you’re unlikely to see any improvements by using fuel with a higher octane (petrol) or cetane (diesel) rating. You will, however, pay up to 10p a litre more for the privilege.

Research conducted by the American Automobile Association (AAA) found that drivers in the United States were wasting more than $2.1 billion by using premium-grade petrol and diesel in vehicles designed to run on standard fuels.

Don’t press the accelerator when you start the car

Every car today has engine electronics that regulate the car starting procedure. A few years ago, you needed to use a little gas to get the car running - but you don’t need to do this anymore.

Continued on page 88 ......
Choose wisely, petrol or diesel?

Averaging 40mpg and 42mpg. Or, to put it another way, an additional visual glance - can use 6% more fuel. That's the difference between Tyres under inflated by 15psi - a difference you may not notice from an electric pump and check and inflate yourself, rather than go to a filling station, but the savings soon add up. You could also buy This simple check can save you big. OK, it might cost you to do it..... Continued from page 87

Don’t drive up and down kerbs

Cars are at their least efficient when they are cold. If you drive quickly straight from start-up, you are redoubling the wasted fuel, and also wearing out the engine more quickly in the process. Show some mechanical sympathy and you’ll immediately start saving money.

On a related matter, you shouldn’t allow your engine to idle for too long. Today’s engines are designed to operate from the moment you turn the key – warming the engine is no longer required. If you like the cabin to feel warm on a cold day, it might be worth investing in a car with heated seats and a heated steering wheel. Remember to turn them off when you’ve warmed up, as they will increase your fuel consumption when switched on.

Check your tyre pressures

This simple check can save you big. OK, it might cost you to do it at a filling station, but the savings soon add up. You could also buy an electric pump and check and inflate yourself, rather than go to a garage. Tyres under inflated by 15psi - a difference you may not notice from a visual glance - can use 6% more fuel. That’s the difference between averaging 40mpg and 42mpg. Or, to put it another way, an additional 26 miles from a 60-litre tank of fuel.

Choose wisely, petrol or diesel?

Buying the right engine can save you money

Once, buying a diesel instead of a petrol would automatically save you money. That’s not necessarily true today. For starters, diesels cost more than petrol - on a supermini-sized car, the premium can be 10% or more. Diesel fuel costs no less than petrol and, while they usually give better economy, efficient new petrol engines are catching up. Unless your annual mileage is very high, you can be best sticking to petrol. As a rule of thumb, if you drive more than 10,000 miles in a year, a diesel-engine car could work out cheaper. Anything less than that and a petrol-engined car would make more sense.

You could also consider an electric or hybrid vehicle, if your circumstances allow. Hugle on car insurance

Car insurance can be one of the biggest motoring costs you face annually. Don’t simply accept your auto-renewal quote, give your insurer a call to see if you can haggle and reduce it. Before you do so, make sure you see how well your quote and benefits compare against other insurance providers. You should also consider the factors that influence the cost of your premium. These include the type of car, where you live, the car is kept overnight, your age, driving experience and your history of claims.

Don’t drive up and down kerbs

It’s amazing how many people drive up and down kerbs. This damage’s the metal wires in the sidewall of the tyre (and often the alloy wheel itself), and will eventually lead to a puncture. Not only will avoiding driving up and down kerbs save you money, it will also keep you safe.

Buy a smartphone holder

If you are caught using a hand-held mobile phone behind the wheel, you will be fined and lose points on your licence.

A good quality smartphone holder will work out a lot cheaper than a petrol-engined car would make more sense. They usually give better economy, efficient new petrol engines are better, but the savings soon add up. You could also buy an electric pump and check and inflate yourself, rather than go to a garage. Tyres under inflated by 15psi - a difference you may not notice from a visual glance - can use 6% more fuel. That’s the difference between averaging 40mpg and 42mpg. Or, to put it another way, an additional 26 miles from a 60-litre tank of fuel.

Choose wisely, petrol or diesel?

Buying the right engine can save you money

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Don’t use your windscreen wipers on ice or frost.

Windscreen wipers can be costly to replace. And they’ll wear out much more quickly if you use them on ice or frost in winter - you even risk tearing them entirely. Scrape the screen or use de-icer instead - this is also much safer (and less irritating for sleeping neighbours). If you haven’t got a scraper, these can be sourced locally and are quite cheap.

Empty your boot and ditch the roof rack

Don’t carry unnecessary weight around with you. On average, every 50kg will increase your fuel consumption by 2%. A boot full of junk means you’re using extra fuel for nothing. Emptying it out will give small savings that will add up the more you drive - particularly if your motoring is mainly stop-start driving. Remove your roof bars when they’re not in use. Not only do they weigh between 3kg to 5kg, they’ll also increase the amount of drag, increasing fuel consumption by about 10%.

Monitor your fuel economy

Do you know how many miles per gallon (MPG) your car returns locally and are quite cheap instead - this is also much safer (and less irritating for sleeping neighbours). If you haven’t got a scraper, these can be sourced locally and are quite cheap.

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Which of These Famous Christmas Movie Cars Are Your Favourite?

The holiday season is almost upon us, and for many families, that means the annual viewing of a few favourite Christmas movies that have occurred in the past. Maybe you love “White Christmas” for the music, or you identify with the Griswold’s disastrous efforts at being merry together. It’s always good to sneak in a couple of old-fashioned tear-jerkers, like “Miracle on 34th Street” or “It’s a Wonderful Life,” to get you through an afternoon gift-wrapping marathon. In this section we have looked at why it is likely that some cars dictate which Christmas movie makes your favourites list. Here are a few cars that starred in some of the all time favourite Christmas movies:

1937 Oldsmobile Six in 1983’s “A Christmas Story”
Sure, you will shoot your eye out with that Red Ryder BB gun, but at least you’ll still ride in style. This iconic car would have been a steal in its day, but the Old Man isn’t too charmed by his Six. He complains about the car’s tendency to freeze up, and who could forget one of the most famous scenes in the movie that involved the car? When Ralphie helps his father change the tyre and lets the lug nuts scatter, the expletive that escapes his mouth was watched with amazement by the whole nation. Ralphie was cross and the Old Man was cross, but at least the Six was a crossover before its time! Maybe you have favourite cars from holiday movies that didn’t make this list, but it’s probably safe to say that those of us car enthusiasts are always a little attached to the cars that help make our favourite Christmas movies unforgettable.

The 1919 Dodge Brothers’ Touring Car from 1946’s “It’s a Wonderful Life”
While Burt’s police car and Ernie’s cab make some memorable appearances, it’s George’s Touring Car that takes on a role as one of the best cars from holiday movies. George crashes into a tree before heading to the bridge to jump, and who could forget the scene where George and Mary are helping a family move and there’s room for the kids, plus a goat? That Touring Car was a crossover before its time!

Clark W. Griswold’s Family Truckster in 1989’s “Christmas Vacation”
It’s not as memorable as the car from “National Lampoon’s Vacation,” but the Truckster in the Christmas holiday classic is one of those cars that seems to become a character in the movie. The Taurus gets a devilish role when the family heads out to cut their Christmas tree and Clark launches it quite memorably into the air. The Truckster in the Christmas holiday classic is one of those cars that seems to become a character in the movie. The Taurus gets a devilish role when the family heads out to cut their Christmas tree and Clark launches it quite memorably into the air.
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