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Remembering a Keeper of Redditch's Story

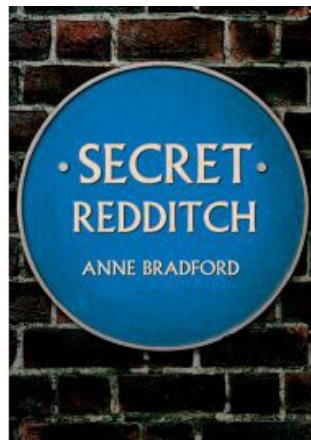
A Tribute to Anne Bradford

Every community has its storytellers the people who quietly dedicate themselves to preserving memories that might otherwise slip away. For Redditch, that storyteller was Anne Bradford. With her passing at the age of 91, we say goodbye to a woman who devoted her life to capturing the spirit, voices, and heritage of our town.

Anne wasn't simply a historian. She was the keeper of Redditch's soul. Through her books, inter-

views, and lifelong curiosity, she pieced together the hidden threads that bind our community: the memories of ordinary people, the changing streets, the lost trades, the folklore, the forgotten corners. She gave voice to lives and stories that might never have been heard.

A Life Devoted to Our Past
Over the decades, Anne produced an impressive body of work including *Secret Redditch* and *Old Redditch Voices*, that



has become invaluable to anyone seeking to understand where Redditch has come from. Her titles including collections of local memories and accounts of earlier eras reveal a deep respect for everyday people and a desire to make history accessible to all.

She had a rare gift: the ability to make the past feel close, tangible, and deeply human. Her books didn't rely on grand events or sweeping drama. Instead, they celebrated the life of the town as lived by real people workers, families, storytellers, and those whose voices are often lost to time.

Anne believed that history belonged



to everyone. And she wrote accordingly, with warmth, care, and a genuine love for the people of Redditch.

Guarding the Town's Memory
Much of Anne's work now sits safely in local collections and community archives, where it will continue to serve as a guiding light for historians, researchers, residents, and the many people who simply want to feel connected to the place they call home.

In a town that has seen considerable change over the years, her commitment to preserving what came before feels more important than ever. She helped ensure that even as streets evolve and the town grows, the stories of earlier generations remain within reach.

She reminded us that heritage isn't just about buildings or dates it's about people.

A Loss Felt Deeply
Anne's passing is felt across Redditch not only because she was a beloved author, but because she gave us something irreplaceable: a shared memory. Without her work, many of the stories she collected might have vanished forever.

Losing someone with such dedication to preserving our identity leaves a gap not just in our cultural record, but in the heart of the community.

Carrying Her Legacy Forward
As we reflect on Anne's remarkable contribution, this moment invites us to consider how we continue her work:

- By valuing the everyday stories of local people, just as she did.
- By encouraging the sharing of memories, photographs, and personal history from all corners of the town.

• By supporting local archives, museums, and heritage groups, ensuring the past remains alive and accessible.

Most importantly, we can honour Anne by remembering that our history is not static it is written every day, in every home, business, and street. Each of us carries a piece of Redditch's story.

A Lasting Tribute
Anne Bradford leaves behind more than a collection of well-loved books. She leaves behind a legacy of connection a reminder that understanding where we come from helps shape who we are. Her voice may now be silent, but her work continues to speak for us all. In remembering her, we remember ourselves.

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Charity urges parents to know the signs of childhood cancer

A childhood cancer charity is calling on parents to be more aware of the early warning signs of cancer in children after new research revealed that only three in ten parents feel confident they could identify potential symptoms.

The Grace Kelly Childhood Cancer Trust has launched a new awareness campaign, You Know Them Best, encouraging parents and carers to trust their instincts. The message is clear: if something doesn't seem right with your child's health, seek

medical advice promptly. Families are being urged to look out for a range of symptoms, including unusual paleness, extreme tiredness, persistent or recurring pain, unexpected lumps or swelling, unexplained bruising or bleeding, and changes in vision such as a new squint.

The campaign is set to run across Redditch and surrounding areas, using cinema advertising, radio, outdoor displays and digital media to spread the message as widely as possible.

The Trust was founded in 2016

in memory of four-year-old Grace Elizabeth Kelly, who sadly passed away from cancer in 2014. Since its creation, the charity has supported more than 500 families across the region, offering guidance, raising awareness and championing earlier diagnosis.

Among those backing the campaign is Redditch parent Sam Pollard, whose son was diagnosed with cancer at the age of seven. Sam said: "Trust your instinct you know your child best. If you think something is wrong, go back to your doctor."

Healthcare professionals emphasise that early detection can make a life-changing difference. Spotting symptoms sooner means children can receive investigations and treatment at the earliest opportunity, improving outcomes and giving families vital reassurance.

To find out more visit:
www.gkct.org





What a magical term we've had at Chloe May's Dance Academy!

As the principal of CMDA, I feel incredibly proud looking back at all our dancers have achieved over the past few months. Our biggest highlight was without a doubt our spectacular academy production Glitter & Glow: A Festive Show, which lit up Stourbridge Town Hall on Saturday 29th November. An amazing 170 dancers from our tiniest 3-year-olds right through to our fabulous adult performers took to the stage with confidence and sparkle. Audiences were treated to a wonderful blend of festive favourites and exciting non-festive pieces across a huge variety of styles including Ballet, Tap, Acro, Commercial, Modern, Street, Lyrical, Contemporary and Cheer Dance. It was a true celebration of the talent, enthusiasm and hard work that fills our classes every week.

Earlier in the term, we were thrilled to see all five of our Grade 3 Ballet students qualify for the Midlands Ballet Cham-

pionships on the strength of their exceptional Grade 2 exam results what a fantastic achievement! Two dancers proudly represented CMDA on the day, gaining invaluable performance experience in a prestigious and inspiring environment.

We also tapped our way into something very special as 40 dancers aged 8 to 71 took part in this year's BBC Children in Need Tapathon. Not only did we help raise money for a wonderful cause, but the event was also a world record attempt we're now eagerly awaiting the official results!

And our newly launched Performance Squads made a dazzling debut on stage at Redditch Gotta Dance at The Palace Theatre on 11th November. These squads in both Kidderminster and Bromsgrove offer our most dedicated students the chance to shine in exciting theatrical settings and this is just

the beginning. As we step into the new year, we are delighted to be welcoming new members to our dance family. We are currently offering trial bookings for January across our children's classes (from walking upwards!) and a brilliant selection of adult classes too. With classes in Tardebigge (near Redditch), Bromsgrove and Kidderminster, there's something for everyone and lots of opportunities for all ages and abilities to progress and perform.

Join us for a 3-week trial and discover the joy of dance at Chloe May's Dance Academy visit:

chloemaysdanceacademy.co.uk to secure your space today!



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Eyewear Styling How to look and feel spectacular in your glasses

By Ella McCormack
Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians



Finding the perfect pair of specs can feel like looking for a needle in a haystack. You can browse racks and stacks of fabulous frames until your heart is content, but too much choice can feel overwhelming. Confusion and frustration soon sneak in. How on earth are you going to find 'the one'?

Eyewear styling takes the guess-work out of your frame search. It's a considered and tailored approach, creating an enjoyable personal shopping experience. Here are some of the key components to an effective eyewear styling consultation.

Colour Analysis

Scientists have reported that the human eye may be able to

distinguish about 10 million different colour variations. The Munsell colour system uses the properties of hue, chroma and value to understand the ways in which the human eye perceives colour.

At Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians, we've trained with world renown personal styling and image consultancy Colour Me Beautiful. They have adapted the Munsell colour system to determine six primary colour palettes; Cool, Warm, Clear, Soft, Light, and Deep.

Colour analysis looks at your skin tone, eye colour, hair colour and overall image to reveal your dominant colouring type. We have swatches, books and cards in the practice to help you see

which tones of colour work for and against you in real life. Although anyone can wear any colour they want, it's inevitable that certain shades of colour will suit you more than others. It's all down to science after all!

Face Shape

The shape of your frame should flatter your features and bring out your natural beauty. Opposites attract is often the rule here. For example, if you have any strong features, you'll want your frame to soften them. If you have a round face, you'll look good in rectangular, square, cat-eye, or geometric shapes.

It's easy to default to something which is like what you've had before or a frame which suits most

people. But more than one shape will look good on you, and it's going for something more unusual that will get the compliments flooding in.

Style Personality

Your glasses should reflect who you are. You need to feel comfortable and confident in wearing them for years to come. To last the test of time, it's always better to focus on what looks stylish on you, rather than follow fashion. A quick-fire style personality quiz can help decipher whether you truly want your eyewear to be bold and beautiful, relaxed and romantic, or classic and understated.

Most people have more than one pair of specs to represent them and their lifestyle. An office pair could be more structured and serious. A weekend pair could be more fun or casual. Heavy hands

hold practical considerations, whereas dinners and parties may demand a more glamourous affair.

Eyewear Selection

An eyewear expert will be able to make frame suggestions based on your prescription and the results of your styling consultation.

We tend to hand-pick five or six frames from our eyewear gallery and present them to you to try on. We'll even throw in a wildcard to really mix things up! Every frame we have has been carefully collated from independent eyewear designers worldwide. Some frames are limited edition, and certain frames can be customised to be completely unique and to achieve the perfect fit.

Conclusion

Whether you want to see or be

seen, choosing the right eyewear is crucial for your health and well-being. Most opticians will provide as little or as much help as you want them to when looking at frames. Take the opportunity to step out of your comfort zone and try something new. You won't look back!

Ella McCormack is the group manager of Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians. She has sixteen years of experience in the optical industry and is a finalist for Dispensing Optician of the Year at the Optician Awards 2025. Styling consultations with Ella and the team are currently complimentary and available by appointment.

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Your Local Councillor Ward Surgeries In Redditch

Redditch Councillors are continuing their commitment to being visible, accessible, and available to residents by holding regular local ward surgeries across the borough.

These sessions offer a valuable opportunity for residents to speak directly with their elected representatives, raise concerns, ask questions, or simply connect with the people representing them on Redditch Borough Council.

Whether you're looking for advice, need help with a local issue, or want to better understand what's happening in your community, your local Labour team is here to listen.

Below is a list of upcoming ward surgeries across Redditch:

North Ward (including Church Hill)

Councillors Bill Hartnett and Monica Stringfellow
•1st Saturday of the month
Ecumenical Centre,
10:30am-12:00pm
•3rd Friday of the month

St Andrew's Church, Upper Field Close, 12:00-1:00pm

Matchborough & Woodrow

Councillors Jane Spilsbury, Paul Wren and James Fardoe
•1st Saturday of the month
Christ Church, Matchborough,
10:30am-12:00pm
•3rd Saturday of the month
Woodrow Library,
10:30am-12:00pm

The Link, Winyates,
12:00-1:00pm

Greenlands & Lakeside

Councillors Andy Fry, Juma Begum and Joanna Kane
•1st Saturday of the month
Ecumenical Centre,
10:30am-12:00pm
•2nd Saturday of the month
St John's Church, Greenlands Avenue, 10:30-11:30am

Central Ward

Councillors Sharon Harvey, Will Boyd and Gary Slim
•1st Saturday of the month
Ecumenical Centre,
10:30am-12:00pm



Headless Cross & Oakenshaw (including Wirehill)

Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Ian Woodall and David Munro
•1st Saturday of the month
Ecumenical Centre,
10:30am-12:00pm
•3rd Saturday of the month
Headless Cross Green (tent),
11:00am-12:30pm

Winyates

Councillors Jen Snape, Rita Rogers and Alan Mason
•3rd Saturday of the month
Winyates Green Community Centre, 10:30-11:30am
•3rd Saturday of the month

Do you host a local councillor surgery, advice session or drop-in clinic in Redditch?

We'd love to include your details in a future issue. Please email us at: contactredditchmatters@gmail.com with the information.

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THIS MONTHS Local Lowdown Quirky Tales & Local Lore

January in Redditch brings its own batch of mysterious tales, theatre legends and curious winter traditions. Here's this month's pick...

The Palace Theatre's 'Phantom Audience Member'

Staff at Redditch's beloved Palace Theatre often joke about their most loyal and most mysterious visitor. Actors rehearsing late into the evening have reported seeing a silhouette seated up on the balcony... though it's always empty when they check. Every January, as the theatre schedule restarts, the story makes its annual comeback.



The Pub That "Opens" Once a Year

On the outskirts of Redditch sits an old, long-closed pub at the centre of a local urban legend. Some residents claim that once each winter, faint warm light appears inside for a single evening long after the building was boarded up. Probably a passing car... but it makes a great fire-side tale.



The Winter Lantern Trail That Never Was

Locals still talk about a planned community lantern trail from the early 2000s that was cancelled due to heavy snow but according to the story, a handful of families went ahead anyway, placing glowing lanterns along a footpath in the early hours. People still claim to spot odd flickers of light in that area each January.



Moonlit Walkers of Arrow Valley

Park rangers often laugh about reports of "moonlit walkers" shadowy figures seen strolling the lake paths just as fog rolls in. Most say it's just joggers wearing head torches... but the legend grows a little each winter.



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January's New Resolution: Buy Nothing New

Keep Britain Tidy's annual "Buy Nothing New Month" asks that people only buy essential items such as food and medicines and forgo any purchases of new items and look at repairing or reusing instead.

Embracing repair saves you money, cuts down on the need to make new items and gives you a truly satisfying feeling of self-sufficiency. Online tutorials and local repair cafes are making it easier than ever to learn the skills you need.

The next step is to maximize what you already own. The

most environmentally sound item is the one that already exists.

Finally, commit to resisting the sales. Instead of buying a new piece of clothing because it's cheap, try hosting a clothing swap with friends or commit to buying only preloved for the next month.

Making these changes creates a domino effect: less waste in your bin, less money leaving your bank account, and less pressure on the planet. Let's make 2026 the year we choose restoration over retail!

For more information on Buy Nothing New Month visit www.keepbritaintidy.org and for general waste prevention tips and ideas visit www.letswasteless.com.



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LET'S WASTE LESS





Hidden Redditch: The Stories from the Town You Thought You Knew

Redditch is full of familiar sights, bustling shops, leafy walks, and well-loved community landmarks. But tucked behind the everyday are stories, quirks and forgotten details that reveal a very different side to the town. This is the Redditch most residents never get to see: a place shaped by quiet mysteries, unusual inventions and centuries of reinvention.

One of the most intriguing hidden stories begins beneath the ground. Few people realise that parts of modern Redditch were built over a network of historic cellars, storage spaces and remnants of early workshops. Though most are now sealed, they hint at the small industrial hubs that once lined the town before needle-making became the defining trade. These tucked-away rooms once stored metal, tools and

goods destined for markets far beyond Worcestershire.

Then there's the story of the long-forgotten Redditch "ghost tram". Before the New Town redevelopment reshaped the landscape, early plans explored building a light tram system to link the growing neighbourhoods. While it never came to fruition, residents in the 1960s often spoke of test routes and temporary track segments laid for planning demonstrations. No trace exists now, yet it remains one of Redditch's more curious urban legends.

Hidden history also lingers in the quiet corners of Arrow Valley Country Park. Long before the lakes, trails and wildlife habitats, the land formed part of large estates connected to the historic Bordesley Abbey. Monks once

managed the fields and woodlands here, leaving behind earthworks and boundaries that only the keen-eyed walker will spot today.

Even the modern Kingfisher Shopping Centre holds secrets. Beneath its polished walkways sits the site of Redditch's original town centre, including old shopfronts and street layouts that shaped the town for generations. In some service corridors, you can still see the outlines where earlier buildings once stood. These stories, small as they seem, remind us that Redditch is more than a New Town; it's a place where each generation has left its mark, sometimes quietly and sometimes boldly. By uncovering these hidden layers, we find a town richer in character, heritage and intrigue than many realise. And often, the most fascinating stories are the ones hiding in plain sight.

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Putting Young Voices at the Heart of Our Democracy

By Chris Bloore, Labour MP for Redditch and the Villages

If anyone ever tells you young people aren't interested in politics, send them to Redditch. Over the last week, during UK Parliament Week 2025, I've met hundreds of children and teenagers across our town and villages and let me tell you, they are switched on, outspoken and absolutely determined to shape their future.

More than 18 schools, youth groups, community organisations and even Millcroft Care Home took part this year. From first schools and high schools to Scouts, Girlguiding, home educators and the Heart of Worcestershire College, the message was loud and clear: our community believes in democracy and our young people want their voices heard.

At St Thomas More Catholic First School in Woodrow, I spent the

morning with their brilliant Year 4 "Future Leaders". They grilled me on everything from mental health to community safety and proudly told me how they lead within their school. Headteacher Anna-Marie Rooney calls the school "a jewel in the heart of Woodrow" and she's right. Their enthusiasm was infectious.

At Woodfield Academy, I helped launch their brand-new Woodfield Parliament. Every class now elects its own Class MP and the first group of pupil MPs wasted no time setting out their priorities and asking how decisions in Westminster actually get made. Watching them step forward with confidence and purpose was one of the most inspiring moments of my week. But this wasn't just a tour of schools - it was the start of something bigger. I have invited

every school in Redditch and the Villages to submit one question for me to raise in Parliament. These questions on education, mental health, youth services, safety, the environment and more, will be taken straight to Ministers and debates in the months ahead, with pupils' names included where permissions allow. Their voices will be recorded in Hansard, on the parliamentary record.

And that matters. Too often, politics is treated as something that happens far away in Westminster. But democracy is built right here in classrooms, assemblies, Scout huts, youth groups and community halls across our town.

To every teacher, youth leader, volunteer, parent and pupil who took part: thank you. You're proving that politics belongs to all of us, especially the next generation growing up here in Redditch.



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January Gardening: Preparing for Winter and planning ahead



January may feel like the quietest month in the gardening calendar, but it's an essential time for preparation, protection, and thoughtful planning. While growth above the soil slows down, plenty is happening underground and with the right care now, your garden will be well positioned for a flourishing spring.

Begin by checking that your winter protection is still doing its job. Cold snaps, strong winds, and heavy rain can loosen fleece, topple pots, or expose vulnerable plants. Reinforce coverings where needed, brush heavy snow off evergreens, and move delicate containers into sheltered corners. It's also a good opportunity to tidy borders, clearing away soggy leaves and debris that can harbour pests and diseases.

If the ground isn't frozen, January is ideal for pruning dormant fruit trees such as apples and pears. A light winter prune shapes healthier growth and encourages better harvests later in the year. You can also plant bare-root roses, hedging, and fruit bushes excellent value and quick to establish when planted while dormant.

Planning is just as important as practical jobs this month. Use these quieter days to map out your garden goals: which flowers you want to grow, which vegetables you'll prioritise, and where improvements could be made. Order seeds early, as popular varieties often sell out before spring. It's also a great time to clean tools, organise the shed, and prepare pots and trays for February sowing.

January is also a wonderful month for observing and supporting wildlife. Putting out high-energy food such as fat balls, seeds, and suet helps birds through the coldest weeks and encourages them to stay nearby for spring nesting. Refreshing water sources and keeping feeders clean makes a real difference. These small acts not only support local wildlife but also bring colour, movement, and joy to otherwise quiet winter gardens.

Cold and still it may be, but January is full of promise. With a little care and planning now, your garden will be ready to burst into life when warmer days return.



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HOME FURNISHING

Choosing the Perfect Bed

A Guide to Comfort and Style

A bed is more than just a piece of furniture—it's a personal sanctuary, a place of rest and rejuvenation. Choosing the perfect bed involves balancing comfort, style, and functionality to create an inviting sleep space that enhances your well-being. Here's how to select the ideal bed for your needs.

1. Consider Size and Space

The size of your bed plays a crucial role in comfort and functionality. A single or twin bed is ideal for smaller rooms or guest spaces, while a double or queen size suits most couples. For those who prioritize luxury and extra space, a king or super king bed provides maximum comfort. Be sure to measure your room to ensure your chosen bed fits harmoniously within the space.

2. Choose the Right Mattress

A great bed starts with a quality mattress. Whether you prefer a firm, medium, or soft feel, selecting the right mattress type—memory foam, latex, hybrid, or innerspring—can make all the difference in sleep quality. Consider

your sleeping position, body type, and personal comfort preferences before making a choice.

3. Frame Materials and Design

Bed frames come in a variety of materials and styles to complement your décor. Wooden frames offer a warm, rustic appeal, while metal frames provide a sleek, modern look. Upholstered beds add a touch of luxury and comfort, especially with plush headboards that create a cozy atmosphere.

4. Storage and Functionality

For those with limited space, storage beds with built-in drawers or ottoman-style lift-up bases provide practical solutions. Multi-functional bed designs, such as foldable or sofa beds, are ideal for compact homes or guest rooms.

5. Aesthetic and Personal Style

Your bed should reflect your personality and enhance your bedroom's aesthetic. Whether you prefer minimalist, classic, or contemporary

designs, select a bed that aligns with your taste while maintaining a soothing and restful ambiance.

By carefully considering these elements, you can create a perfect sleep sanctuary that blends comfort, style, and practicality.



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THE JANUARY RESET

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January Declutter & Reset Creating a Calm Home for the New Year

January is the perfect month to reset your home and create a calmer, more organised environment for the year ahead. After the busy festive season, many of us find our living spaces feeling cluttered, crowded, or simply in need of a refresh. A January declutter doesn't just tidy your home it can also lift your mood, reduce stress, and set a positive tone for the months to come. Start by tackling the areas that tend to gather the most "holiday leftovers": living rooms, hallways, and kitchens. Removing unused décor, recycling packaging, and finding homes for new gifts instantly creates breathing space. January is also an ideal

time to re-evaluate belongings. If something hasn't been used in a year, consider donating or recycling it to free up room and simplify your surroundings.

Smart storage solutions can make an enormous difference. Baskets with lids, stackable boxes, ottomans with hidden compartments, and slim shelving units all help keep everyday items organised while maintaining a stylish look. In smaller homes, using vertical space such as wall-mounted shelves or hooks can transform cluttered corners into practical storage areas.

Creating a peaceful home isn't

just about tidying; it's about establishing habits that support calm living. Introduce regular "reset moments" five to ten minutes each evening to return things to their place. Not only does this prevent clutter from building up again, but it also makes mornings feel more relaxed and organised.

Finally, bring a sense of freshness into your space. A new houseplant, a scented candle, or simply rearranging furniture can make a room feel renewed without any major expense. Paired with decluttering and thoughtful organisation, these small touches help create a soothing environment to start the year.

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HOME FURNISHING Warm Up Your Home

January's Rug Refresh

January is the ideal time to refresh your living spaces, and one of the simplest yet most transformative updates you can make is introducing a new rug. After the festive season, rooms can feel a little sparse, but the right rug instantly adds warmth, colour, and comfort perfect for brightening up the winter months.

Rugs play a key role in creating a cosy atmosphere, especially during January's colder days.

A thick, textured rug not only feels wonderful underfoot but also helps to insulate your home, making living areas feel warmer and more inviting. From deep-pile shaggy styles to handwoven wool designs, there's a rug to suit every taste and budget.

They're also an excellent way to redefine a space. A well-chosen rug can anchor a seating area, add personality to a bedroom, or bring softness to hallways and dining rooms. January is a great

month to explore earthy tones, soft neutrals, and warm patterns that complement winter décor while still feeling fresh for spring.

For those looking for value, the January sales often offer fantastic savings on quality rugs, making it the perfect time to invest in something long-lasting. Whether you opt for a statement piece with bold patterns or a subtle, minimalist design, a new rug can completely change the atmosphere of a room without the need for a full makeover.





JANUARY HEALTH

A Fresh Start for Mind and Body

January is also Mental Wellness Month



January is often seen as a month of new beginnings. After the festive season fades and the year opens before us like a blank page, many people naturally shift their attention towards health, wellbeing, and positive routines. What's less widely known is that January is also Mental Wellness Month a time dedicated to raising awareness around mental health, encouraging self-care, and promoting habits that support both emotional and physical resilience.

While many New Year resolutions focus on diet, fitness, and breaking old habits, January offers an ideal opportunity to look inward, slow down, and build a foundation for overall wellbeing that lasts far beyond the first

few weeks of the year. Prioritising Mental Health Mental health impacts every part of our lives—from energy levels and relationships to productivity and how we cope with stress. Mental Wellness Month invites us to take stock of our emotional wellbeing and recognise that mental health deserves just as much attention as physical health.

During winter, shorter days and colder weather can sometimes affect mood. Some people experience lower motivation or seasonal dips in energy. January offers a moment to acknowledge these feelings and introduce small, gentle practices to support mental balance. Simple acts such as taking breaks from

screens, spending time in natural light, connecting with loved ones, or making time for positive routines can make a noticeable difference.

It's also a reminder that seeking help from talking openly with a friend to consulting a mental health professional should be seen as a sign of strength rather than reluctance.

Building Healthy Habits That Last January is synonymous with fresh starts, but the key to lasting wellness is setting realistic, sustainable habits rather than overwhelming yourself with drastic changes. Instead of quick fixes or extreme resolutions, this month is an ideal time to focus on steady improvements that feel manageable and achievable.

Some positive habits might include:

- Regular movement: This doesn't have to mean joining a gym. A brisk walk, stretching routine, or a short daily home workout can do wonders for both mood and physical health.

- Balanced eating: After December's indulgence, many people crave wholesome, nourishing meals. January is a great time to experiment with seasonal produce, simple recipes, and mindful eating rather than strict diets.

- Quality sleep: Rest is a pillar of wellbeing. Creating a calming bedtime routine, reducing late-night screen time, and aiming for consistent sleep patterns can significantly improve mental clarity and energy levels.

- Mindfulness and reflection: Journalling, meditation, or simply taking a few minutes of quiet each day can help reduce stress and support emotional resilience.

Embracing Self-Care Without Guilt

One of the key messages of Mental Wellness Month is the importance of self-care—something many people forget to prioritise during busy schedules. Self-care isn't about luxury or indulgence; it's about making time for activities that restore your mind and body.

This can be as simple as reading a book, enjoying a warm bath, spending time on a hobby, or stepping outdoors for fresh air. These small rituals create moments of calm and remind

us that wellbeing isn't an after-thought; it's essential.

A Positive Outlook for the Year Ahead

January sets the tone for the months to come. By starting the year with a focus on mental wellness, we're more likely to approach challenges with clarity, patience, and confidence. Whether you choose to adopt new routines, reconnect with personal goals, or simply slow down and reflect, this month is a valuable reminder that wellness begins with intention.

As the year unfolds, carrying these mindful habits forward can lead to a more balanced, fulfilling, and healthier lifestyle one where mental wellbeing is nurtured just as consciously as physical health.

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The Magic of Motown Returns to Redditch This January



Seen by millions across the UK, The Magic of Motown is back for 2026 and it's set to light up Redditch with an unforgettable night of music and nostalgia.

This smash-hit show has become one of Britain's most-loved theatre successes, bringing the timeless sound of Motown to life with incredible vocals, sparkling costumes and high-energy choreography.

Expect a full-throttle celebration as the cast take you on a journey through some of the greatest hits ever recorded.

Get ready to sing along to classics from legends such as Marvin Gaye, Diana Ross, Stevie Won-

der, The Supremes, The Temptations, The Four Tops, Martha Reeves, The Jackson 5, Smokey Robinson and many more. It's the ultimate feel-good party guaranteed to have you dancing in your seat!

The Magic of Motown is a tribute production and is not affiliated with the original artists or their estates. Promoter reserves the right to alter the programme.

Saturday 24th January, 7:30pm
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For tickets and more information, visit the Palace Theatre website.
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Peach Grilled Chicken With Lime Honey Ginger Sauce



Ingredients

2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts,
3 cloves garlic, grated
1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
1/4 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon sesame oil
Juice of one lime
3 tablespoons honey
1/2 tablespoon instant chicken bouillon (optional)
1/2 teaspoon kosher salt and freshly ground black pepper
2 or 3 peaches sliced

2. In a gallon-size Ziploc bag or large bowl, combine the chicken and marinade. Marinate for at least 2 hours, up to 8 hours, turning the bag occasionally. When ready to cook, drain the chicken from the marinade.



Method

1. To make the grilled chicken peach kababs: In a medium bowl, combine the garlic, lime juice, honey, olive oil, freshly grated ginger, instant chicken bouillon, and sesame oil. Reserve 1/4 cup of the marinade and set aside.

3. Preheat your grill to medium heat. Thread the chicken pieces onto skewers, alternating with peach slices. Brush with canola oil; season with salt and pepper to taste.

4. Add the chicken skewers to the grill, and cook, turning occasionally, until the chicken is thoroughly cooked through, reaching an internal temperature of 165°F (74°C), about 10 minutes. Brush the grilled chicken skewers with the reserved sauce mixture, cooking for an additional 1-2 minutes. Serve immediately – enjoy!

THINK YOU KNOW WHAT YOU ARE EATING? So did we....



From surprising amounts of nutrients to the origins of some of our favourite dishes, here are some interesting food facts that will boggle your mind.

1. Dark chocolate can be more than just a sweet treat

The dark chocolate we know and love is made from the roasted beans of the cacao tree and has a ton of interesting facts – many being health benefits.

According to Harvard, dark chocolate can help lower blood pressure and reduce inflammation. A study of an isolated tribe with high intakes of cocoa had lower rates of heart disease, cancer and diabetes compared to the same tribesmen who had

migrated to cities.

Bonus fact: Dark chocolate that's 70% cocoa or more actually contains more caffeine per ounce than coffee. Just don't expect to stay up all night with the powdered hot chocolate you'd get at a supermarket. This stuff tends to be quite low in caffeine.



2. Literally eat a fruit that's as sweet as nectar
Did you know that the word

'nectarine' means 'sweet like nectar' and this is most likely the origin of the name?

It's believed nectarines, like peaches, originated in China over 4,000 years ago.

Nutritionally, nectarines are a high source of Vitamin C and A and are abundant in antioxidants. They aid in weight loss, help regulate blood pressure levels and overall good health. They also help improve immunity and heart health.



3. Raspberries are a member of the rose family

As are cherries, apricots, plums, pears, apples, quinces, peaches, strawberries, and blackberries. Unlike roses though, these types of fruits typically have flowers with five equal petals arranged around a central core. And, just like roses, raspberries (and blackberries) have plenty of thorns too - ouch!



4. The world's most hated vegetable is one of the best for you Brussels sprouts may be the most hated vegetable, but it's among the most nutritious veggies out there.

It's packed full of vitamins and minerals, has virtually no calories, no fat, no cholesterol, and it fills you up. Better yet, it also has an anti-oxidant that has shown to be anti-inflammatory and could fight cancer.



5. Pistachios are actually duping us, These little crunchy, green snacks have been fooling us for years. Pistachios aren't nuts at all, but rather a "drupe" - a family that also includes cherries, peaches and olives.

So, technically, it's a fruit! Well, actually the seeds of a fruit (the outer fruit is removed during processing). Like other 'nuts', pistachios are a rich source of protein, fibre, vitamins and minerals, which can help people with weight management, protect against diabetes and hypertension and improve digestion. The omega-3 fatty acids present in pistachios can help lower your blood pressure.



6. Caesar salad isn't from anywhere near Italy
Bet you didn't know this. We sure didn't! The Caesar salad was actually invented in Ti-

juana, Mexico back in 1927. Hotel Caesar owner Caesar Cardini wanted to make dinner for friends, but didn't have much at hand. Lettuce was tossed into a bowl with a dressing made from whatever he had on hand and salad history was made. There's even an annual festival in Tijuana every June in honour of the infamous side dish. (To be fair, Cardini himself was actually born in Italy)



7. Avocados are fruit

Avocados are a perennial fruit, and according to Australian Avocado the first ones to arrive in Australia were planted in Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens back in 1840.

They also must be picked when matured in order to ripen, which can take between 1-2 weeks. In Spain and Mexico, avocados are called "alligator pears" due to their shape and bumpy, green skin, while in India and China, they are referred to as "butter pears".

This healthy food is good for you too! They're a great source of vitamin C, E, K, and B-6.



8. Spam is actually just short for 'spiced ham'

We're not talking about the unsolicited emails you get, but that mysterious meat in a can. Ever wondered what it means? It's short for 'Spiced Ham'. Not so

mysterious huh? Also not so 'spiced' either. A can of spam includes just six ingredients: pork, salt, water, potato starch, sugar and sodium nitrate (a preservative often used for cured meats).



9. Oreos are vegan

It seems "milk's favourite cookie" can actually be dipped in oat, soy or almond milk for a delicious vegan snack.

These iconic sandwich cookies don't actually contain any milk products or eggs so are vegan-friendly. You can even get an official vegan Oreo tote bag to carry your favourite plant-based biscuits in.



10. Peanut butter is good for you

Studies have shown that eating peanut butter can help lower cholesterol, aid in weight loss, add protein to your diet and prevent type 2 diabetes. It's also low in carbs.

Of course, many peanut butters do include extra ingredients like sugar, salt, honey or chocolate to change the flavouring, so keep that in mind if you're buying peanut butter thinking it's a health food. Bet you didn't know this either, but peanut butter glows in the dark after it's exposed to intense light!





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Brussels sprouts winter salad with clementine dressing



Ingredients

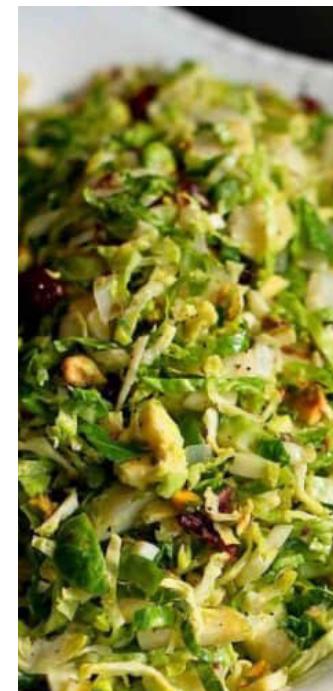
- 350g brussels sprouts shredded
- 150g kale shredded
- 50ml extra virgin olive oil
- 3 clementines 2 peeled and segmented, 1 zested and juiced
- 3 tbsp apple cider vinegar
- 1 tbsp honey or maple syrup
- 2 tsp Dijon mustard
- 50g pine nuts
- 50g pomegranate seeds

Step 1

Put the shredded sprouts and kale in a large bowl with a large pinch of salt. Pour the olive oil into a small bowl or jug, and mix in the clementine zest and juice, vinegar, honey and mustard, then pour this over the leaves. Scrunch with your hands until the dressing is well distributed, then leave to soften for 15 mins.

Step 2

Fold through the pine nuts and clementine segments, then spoon the salad onto a platter or into bowls. Scatter over the pomegranate seeds, if using, and serve. rare beef, 30 mins for medium. Allow to stand for 10 mins before serving in thick slices.





Seasonal Spotlight: Beetroot – January's Vibrant Winter Gem

January can feel a little grey, but one vegetable that brings colour, comfort, and nourishment to the plate is the humble beetroot. In season throughout winter, beetroot is at its best right now: earthy, sweet, and wonderfully versatile.

Known for its deep ruby flesh, beetroot has long been a staple of British winter cooking. It thrives in cold weather, stores well, and offers a surprising dose of vitamins, minerals, and antioxidants. Rich in folate,

fibre, and nitrates, it's a brilliant choice for those starting the year with healthy eating intentions. Beetroot has even been linked to improved heart health and better stamina: a welcome boost for anyone tackling New Year fitness goals.

In the kitchen, beetroot is far more adaptable than many people realise. Roast it slowly and it becomes sweet and caramelised, perfect for tossing into winter salads with goat's cheese, walnuts, and peppery

rocket. Grate it raw for a vibrant slaw that brightens up cold plates. Blend it into soups for a stunning magenta bowlful – ideal for warming up after a frosty walk. Beetroot also pairs beautifully with earthy flavours like cumin, horseradish, and dill, as well as citrus fruits that cut through its natural sweetness.

For something a little more indulgent, beetroot even earns a place in baking. When puréed, it adds moisture and a subtle richness to chocolate brownies and cakes, of-

fering a slightly healthier twist without compromising on flavour.

Many local farm shops and markets across the area stock freshly harvested beetroot at this time of year, often available in different varieties from classic deep red to golden or even candy-striped Chioggia. Whichever you choose, January is the perfect month to celebrate this colourful root vegetable and make the most of its seasonal goodness.

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January Motoring: A Fresh Start on the Roads

January is always a month of new beginnings, and for many motorists it's the perfect time to reset, refresh and rethink driving habits for the year ahead. After the rush of the festive season and the often-gruelling winter miles, the start of the year offers a welcome moment to slow down, take stock, and get vehicles into top shape for the months ahead.

Winter can be unforgiving, and January's cold snaps, dark mornings and damp roads make it more important than ever to stay prepared. A quick seasonal health check is a smart investment: tyres, brakes and battery condition are the three most common culprits behind early-year breakdowns. Many local garages now

offer free or low-cost winter checks, giving drivers peace of mind just when it's needed most.

It's also the ideal month for a cabin declutter. Removing the leftover Christmas chaos from the boot can improve fuel efficiency, while a fresh interior clean does wonders for that "new year, new start" feeling. Drivers planning longer trips in 2026 should also take the opportunity to update sat-navs and check in with insurance renewals and MOT dates no one enjoys those last-minute panics when paperwork creeps up unexpectedly.

January is traditionally a strong month for car deals

too. With dealerships eager to kick off the year positively, buyers may find attractive promotions on both new and used models. For those not ready to commit, short-term leasing options continue to grow in popularity, offering flexibility in a climate where many want predictability in their monthly budgets.

Whether you're clocking up daily commuter miles or planning weekend family adventures, January is the month to get motoring safely, efficiently and with renewed enthusiasm. Here's to smooth journeys and a great year ahead on the road.

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Skills Bootcamps provide people with the opportunity to improve sector-specific skills in order to either enhance their current career or give them the confidence, and the skills to change career direction.

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The skills provided by a Skills Bootcamp can act as a foundation for further study or boost your career prospects.

They can increase employment chances and open new doors for future training opportunities, or they can give you the skills and confidence to change career.

Skills Bootcamps are free to do and, upon completion gain you a fast-track interview with a local employer.

The range of Skills Bootcamps that are available include ones in Construction skills, Cyber Security, Playwork, Decorating, Plumbing, Leadership and Management, Welding, Warehousing, Hairdressing, Nursing, Early Years, Teaching Assistant, Health & Social Care plus many more. Contact Skills Bootcamps for a full list.

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