

THE ROTUNDA

NORTH FITZROY'S COMMUNITY NEWSPAPER

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EDITORIAL

Merry Christmas!

International mailing systems have let their standards slip recently – it seems each continent's central postage outlet has somehow mistaken 'North Pole' for 'North Fitzroy'. Thousands of Christmas lists have ended up at the neighbourhood's most igloo-looking structure – the Rotunda itself – and thus into the hands of this very publication.

Despite our happy-go-lucky front, *The Rotunda's* attention-seeking editorial staff have quietly been desperate to cause a larger, caustic splash. We want to scandalise North Fitzroy with the kind of gossip *Daily Mail* would kill for, and these Christmas lists – which are written by more adults than you'd think – reveal our residents' deepest desires and darkest secrets. But the Christmas spirit hangs heavy in the air, and we've decided against publishing any of them. You're welcome.

"There's magic in the air."

Indeed, our dogs noses are getting a little redder, middle-aged men who did Mover and are letting their facial hair get white and full and the 11 tram is steaming down St Georges Road like the Polar Express. There's magic in the air, which our map of Edinburgh Gardens on pages 4-5 illustrates.

Then again, this isn't the North Pole. It's going to be a beautifully warm Australian summer and some of us will momentarily desert this little kingdom and head for the coast. So take this as a parting gift – this year's final edition. It's got stories: about the cricket club volunteer who was pals with the late queen, the local woman who competed in the World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship, the ethos behind The Old Bar on Johnston Street, the crossword and more. Meanwhile, Ludo thinks Christmas has gone to the dogs – figuratively, not literally.

Merry Christmas and a happy holidays to everyone, but especially our distributors, elf-like in their diligence. And as always, if anyone would like to contribute, advertise or donate, email northfitzroyrotunda@gmail.com or check out the website. Enjoy your summer, everybody!

Charlie Gill

We respect and acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land, the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation.

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SEEKING CYCLISTS' SAFETY

North Fitzroy bike commuters might soon have safer routes to Kew and Carlton if Fitzroy resident Harrison Watt's petition to the state government for more protected bike lanes brings about change.

Last month, Watt, the spokesperson for 'Bike Lanes for Johnston Street' launched a change.org petition for a bike lane from Kew to Carlton with protected bike lanes along Johnston Street, wider footpaths, lower speed limits and more greenery and planters.

The busy and narrow Johnston St route currently has no dedicated bike lanes, inconsistent speed limits and clearway and a risk of 'dooring' that made it one of Melbourne's top ten unsafe cycling areas in a 2010 study.

Watt's petition launched in late November has attracted about 1600 signatures so far

(December 16). He told *The Rotunda* that he was confident that the prioritising of bikes and buses while still allowing cars and trucks on the route would be adopted.

"The cities of Yarra, Melbourne and Boroondara all support separated bike lanes along Elgin St, Johnston Street and Studley Park Road in their relevant transport strategies. However, Johnston St is a state road under the management of the Department of Transport and Planning. This is why the petition has been addressed to the relevant state ministers," he said.

"Kerbside protected bike lanes along Johnston Street from Kew to Carlton would create a safe east-west cycling route in Melbourne's inner-north. This would connect Fitzroy North residents to key destinations, employment and education hubs via Napier, Smith and Wellington Streets. The proposal would also connect Fitzroy North residents with existing protected cycling routes in and out of the CBD,

including Canning St (links to Rathdowne and Exhibition) and Swanston Street," he said.

North Fitzroy residents will have noticed that the speed limit along St Georges Road and Brunswick Street from Merri Creek to Alexandra Parade was reduced to a consistent 40km/h down from 60km/h in November, but many drivers are yet to slow down. Watt argues that 30km/h is an ideal speed limit in built up areas.

"I think 30km/h is warranted around activity centres, shopping strips and near schools. 40km/h limit elsewhere does work but our streets need to be designed with street calming measures to make people driving cars actually adhere to the limit."

Watt's plan envisages that cars currently travelling on the Studley Park Road and Johnston Street route would instead choose to travel along the Eastern Freeway and Alexander Parade.

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STREET STYLE

Your street style correspondent's eye was desperately trying to find her muse when she spotted this impossible-to-miss gentleman sitting outside the Tin Pot on a beautiful spring afternoon. The next half hour was spent in delightful conversation with local artist 'The Pirate', whose sense of wonder and joy was evident in his hot pink spray painted outfit. Our chat meandered through Bedouin history, how artists are treated in this country, and the rarest of phenomena: good jokes.

NAME:

Zaugutzaz Argenti-Leopardzi. Everybody calls me Pirate. I used to have a pirate hat but I was sleeping on the street and it was stolen. So some people went to that costume shop in Gertrude Street and bought me a new one. A few days later, that was stolen too.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND:

I'm a Sicilian/Bedouin mix. We all came from nomads.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR COFFEE?

I'm often here at the Tin Pot.

WHERE DO YOU GET YOUR CLOTHES?

From the Universe...

IS THERE SOMEONE WHOSE STYLE YOU'VE ALWAYS ADMIRERD?

Aubrey Beardsley, Oscar Wilde, Frida Kahlo, Alexander the Great.

WHERE DID YOU GROW UP?

I grew up in Sydney but left when I was young. I was living in St Kilda in the early 70s and said to my parents that I'm left-handed, and more left-handed people got killed in The Vietnam War, so I'm going to the desert, I'm a pacifist. And then Whitlam got in and stopped conscription. That saved my life.

WHAT DO YOU DO?

I'm an artist. I've worked in theatre. Melbourne always had more culture than anywhere else in Australia and had a live music scene, whereas Sydney was more spasmodic...

WHAT IS YOUR EDUCATION?

I was only interested in art so I went to a TAFE for a year, then I started working in theatre. I had to work as a waiter to get money. Do you know the joke: 'What's the difference between a pizza and an artist?... If you're very careful you can feed a family of four with a pizza! It's so true in this country.

TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAMILY?

My mother was a Scorpio, she was very secretive. My father was a Leo. I was born a Leo/Virgo cusp with Scorpio Rising so I understood them. I lost them in the 80s. They were killed in a car accident. We lost the family house. I've been homeless since.

WERE YOUR PARENTS GOOD PARENTS?

Yes. They told me to follow my soul and my heart as long as I wasn't hurting anyone, no matter what anyone said. When I sat with the girls at high school, I used to look at the dappled light under the trees and think of Vincent Van Gogh.

DO YOU HAVE SIBLINGS?

No. By choice.

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I live in Miller Street. I've been living in North Fitzroy a couple of months. I love it. It's become yuppy but, like Brunswick, it's still got the old Greeks and Italians... I was here in the 70s and I've seen so many changes. I've been on the streets. The streets are dangerous. I've had ice addicts and people who bash you up. I've had 17 mobile phones stolen in nearly four years.



HAVE YOU EVER BEEN IN LOVE?

Once. She was looking after her mother and I said don't forget, you have to look after yourself. Your mother has given you birth, she's given you the greatest gift and she'd want you to use it.

WHAT ARE THE BEST FEATURES OF NORTH FITZROY?

Piedimonte's... It used to be working class Italian. I always liked that. And I like the park and the library. I don't like that there isn't one toilet here. You have to go a long way.

IF NORTH FITZROY COULD HAVE ONE THING THAT IT DOESN'T HAVE, WHAT WOULD YOU WANT?

A carnival all the time! With elephants and clowns and music in the street and block

the roads at least one day a week. Lots of pink and purple, keep people happy.

People say "You know so much!" I say I know what I like and I like what I know. History. I do the f\$#*ing crosswords and sudoku! And I'm 68 in August. I've felt 86 but I'm still pretty good. Here's a great joke: "What's the difference between God and a High Court Judge? God doesn't think he's a High Court Judge!"

WHERE AND WHEN WERE YOU HAPPIEST?

When I open my eyes every morning and say the Daoist saying: "Don't push the river, it flows by itself." And when I'm homeless I quote Rumi, the great poet: "The person that sleeps with the skies as the ceiling and the ground as their floor is the happiest and freest person in the world."

FITZROYALTY IN FULL SWING

Swan Richards, the man who maintains Brunswick Street Oval's cricket pitch, was close friends with the late Queen

By Richard Hinds

So accustomed have those of us at Edinburgh Cricket Club become to the sight of the always helpful and occasionally gruff character riding the club roller up and down the pitch, we forget we are in the presence of cricketing royalty.

Swan Richards is famed as the young cricket bat maker from Adelaide who worked his way up to become the head of Gray-Nicholls' Australian operations.

As such, Swan was the man who crafted the bats of the superstars who made Gray-Nicholls the bat-of-choice for elite players like the Chappell brothers and schoolboy wannabes in the Seventies and beyond.

As Gray-Nicholls grew, so did Swan's reputation. There is barely a big name on the honour roll of cricket greats who he hasn't influenced over the years.

Several years ago, Swan was elevated from mere cricket royalty to Fitzroyalty when he opened his Cricket Kit shop at the northern end of Brunswick St – just outside *The Rotunda's* tightly patrolled North Fitzroy boundary.

Swan rapidly inveigled himself into the life of the local community, earning official

North Fitzroy citizenship through his tireless dedication to the Edinburgh Cricket Club as pitch roller, equipment manager, sounding board and general roustabout.

As the ECC season has gotten into full swing, it has been something of a bitter-sweet time for Swan.

Recently, he released an autobiographical account of his time in cricket, particularly his role with his beloved Crusaders development squad. Titled *The Crusader, The Bat Maker and The Crown*, it covers his heartwarming rise from troubled school drop-out to influential businessman.

"We confirmed the rumour - he really did have her mobile number."

'The Crown' is reference to the close friendship Swan formed with Queen Elizabeth II during his Crusader tours which included games against the Royal Household. (We confirmed the rumour - Swan really did have the Queen's mobile number.)



Swan standing on Brunswick Street Oval.

Less happily, Swan's shop was recently the victim of a burglary in which a substantial number of his best bats were taken that insurance didn't cover. It's already hard yards in the sporting retail sector with online stores cutting into the business of local shops.

So, if you want to support the man who rolls the pitches for the local Under-10s, ensures our club has tidy nets and who gives away countless bats to budding cricketers, get down to Cricket Kit and buy your copy – and all your other cricketing needs – from Swan himself!

Meanwhile, also get down to Brunswick Street on Saturday and Sunday afternoons to watch our Men's and Women's Elevens take the field during

what has been a relatively disruption-free start to the season.

Not to be missed is the sight of First XI captain-coach Suraj Randiv whose recent form has been remarkable, even for a man who played 12 Tests and 31 One Day Internationals for Sri Lanka.

Suraj's recent contribution of 102 in a total of 177 and 8-74 in a 10-run victory over Marcellina OC has somewhat diminished the mystery about who will get the three votes in the club award for that game.

But performances across the board at ECC this season have been testament to the strength and depth of the club – and, of course, the unstinting work of the man on the roller.

LOCAL WOMAN JIG-SOARS

Heidi Schwegler traveled to Spain to compete in the World Jigsaw Puzzle Championship

By Charlie Gill

Everyone can relate to the tedious end-of-day-movie-selection-experience: you've got countless options at your disposal, but still can't decide what to watch. We umm and ahh as if it's a fateful decision that will set us on some unknowable path.

But for local Heidi Schwegler (pictured centre), that's exactly what happened. One dreary pandemic night in 2021, she settled on a film she'd never heard of before named *Puzzle*, about 'competitive speed puzzling'. How was she to know that two years later she'd be competing in the World Championship for a sport that, not long before, she hadn't even known existed?

"I was like, 'Oh my Gosh, is this a thing?'"

Heidi, a financial planner by trade, is a born problem-solver. She was instantly hooked.

"Any sort of puzzle I love doing. My Mum bought a jigsaw puzzle for me when I was a kid, and I did it in a few minutes, and she said, 'But this is for a ten year old', and I was three."

In individual speed puzzling, you need to complete a 500-piece puzzle within ninety minutes. After watching the movie, Heidi didn't waste any time.

"I discovered that I was a lot faster than the average person... I got my hands on as many puzzles as I could."

At the nationals in late 2022, Heidi completed her puzzle in a time of one hour and fifteen minutes. Suddenly, she'd qualified for the World Championships, scheduled to be held in Spain in September 2023.

"Once I made the decision to go, I was in training ever since. I got my hands on any 500-piece puzzle I could find. Me and my friend practiced together on camera, racing each other. I shaved fifteen minutes off my time in the lead-up to the Worlds."

Valladolid, Spain. Thousands of keen puzzlers make their pilgrimage to the storied city, hoping to make their country proud. Speed-puzzling is getting increasingly popular, and the event's quadrupled in size over the last four years. As Heidi explains, it's a cosmopolitan scene chockablock with puzzling superstars.

"The world champ can do a puzzle in under forty minutes. He literally puts two pieces in at the same time. He's a machine, an absolute machine. And there's a 14 year-old boy from Spain who is as fast if not faster than the world champ. And a little girl from Britain who's 9 or 10, and she's just a genius."

"The Czech Republic, the U.S, and a lot of the Nordic countries are very good."

Amongst all this international competition it could have been easy to view the Australian teams as spiritual successors to the Jamaican bobsled team in *Cool Runnings*: out-of-place underdogs with no hope of success. It's not true, of course, but the world sometimes tends to see Aussies as bronzed surfer-neanderthals. But if any of our foreign friends fell victim to that assumption, then 'The Puzzlaroos' left them embarrassed.

"In the team competition, you're given four different puzzles and have to choose two. In the commentary box, they were saying, 'Oh, the Australian team's chosen the really hard puzzles'."

Their picks included a complicated one of a 1960s home: oven, radio, toaster, the works. Everyone else chose a landscape with a lot of sky.

"We know our strengths, and we work really well with busy puzzles: 'Ok, this is part of the toaster, I know exactly where it goes.' Everybody else got stuck on the sky."



Three quarters of the Puzzlaroos. Photo: World Jigsaw Puzzle Federation.

Like a jigsaw itself, a puzzling team needs to fit well together. Heidi explains: "One person might be better at sorting and another better at assembling. People see colours and shapes differently. We start off sorting by color and then revert to shapes. I'm a shape sorter, so I come in at the tail end."

In the heat, the Puzzlaroos ended up finishing fifth out of 80, putting them in a great position for the final. Take that, commentators. In the final, they finished 31st.

"We got seeded in the final in the top 10, so we were disappointed where we finished in the final. We were hoping for a top 20 finish." They'll have a chance to redeem themselves at the next world championships, rumoured to be held in Australia.

Still, that's 31st out of 160 competing teams. Meaning that the Puzzlaroos – a motley crew of four Australian women from different states, generations and lines of work (a financial planner, a retiree, a doctor and a marketing manager) – finished in the top 19 percent in the world. It also makes Heidi the second North Fitzrovia woman to

have competed at a World Championship this past spring (loyal readers will remember hot-air ballooning superstar Josie, from our last issue).

Interestingly, the sport is dominated by women, who made up 85% of competitors at the World Championship. How come?

"It's a good question. I don't know if there's a perception that puzzling is a female hobby like knitting or crocheting. The world champion is a twenty-something male, but the next top thirty or forty people are nearly all female. I don't know what it is."

Either way, Heidi knows why she loves speed puzzling.

"It combines problem solving, adrenaline endorphins and racing all in one. You know there is a solution, and if you just keep putting one piece at a time, you'll get there."

"And every time you put a piece of a puzzle in, you get a tiny hit of happiness. It's a massive endorphin rush, because every time you do a puzzle you get 500 hits of happiness."

Roys aim for finals in 2024

By Gabrielle Murphy

The Fitzroy Women ended their 2023 season with a bang, vanquishing fierce rivals Collegians in a decisive win at Brunswick Street Oval. The supporters were large in number and loud of voice, and were rewarded with a superb finish to what had been a challenging season.

Unlike so many games during the season where the girls played some great footy without overly troubling the scoreboard, in the final game they posted an impressive score against one of the best women's football team in the VAFA (Victorian Amateur Football Association). For Roys supporters who follow the weekly game day reports, they'll know that the amount of times the footy scribes talked during the season about great effort without due reward were too many for counting.

As we also know, football's full of cliches of the ilk of 'one week at a time', and the one that categorises the Roy Women's 2023 season was all about 'rebuild'. A classic example of a rebuild, actually.

Sure, new senior coach and old Royboy Nathan Jumeau was able to call on experienced Roys, a clutch of whom clocked up 100 games in the red and blue in 2023 (Alexa Madden, Luci Murphy and Liz Olney), and some great inclusions from other clubs like Robyn Randall and Sunday Brisbane, our best first year player.

But in a courageous move that threw caution to the wind and defied the footy gods and status quo, Nathan's rebuild strategy relied on giving games to a host of newbies coming through from the Fitzroy Juniors. This included winner of the 2023 Elaine Findlay Perpetual Trophy Best and Fairest award, Simone Mooney, who was also given a rising star nomination by the VAFA in May, and five girls who are still playing for the Fitzroy Junior Football Club.

So how did that pan out, we asked Nathan (or Ju, to his players).

"A definite highlight was the inclusion of the five juniors," says Ju, "but also getting a big win to end the season and be able send off some special retiring Roys in a fitting fashion."



Jumeau rallies his troops. Photo: supplied.

And what have we got to look forward to for the season ahead?

"Preseason is going strong," Ju says. "We've had big numbers turn up already and a lot of new faces and Juniors stepping up to the senior club."

So, now with the rebuild behind him, what's the plan for 2024?

"Building on our knowledge of our game plan and pushing to take that next step and play finals football."

MAP OF THE REALM

Edinburgh Gardens, the green jewel of the inner north, is not just a park – it is a world unto itself

Illustration by Marnie Florence
Words by Charlie Gill

When you're young, you read stories about far-off fantastical places, home to fascinating creatures and untold delights, sparkling fields and darkened burrows. Neverland. Narnia. The Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

Then you get older, and realise there's been one in front of you the entire time. Once a desolate collection of concrete walls, can factories and timber yards, Edinburgh Gardens has transformed into a glittering, verdant island that locals rely on and outsiders flock to.

It is now home to thousands of memories that have been forged, through the years, underneath its foliage and beside its flower bushes. We give to it, and it gives to us. On a warm summer's evening, with a slab of cold beer pinning down a picnic rug, how could anyone claim it isn't paradise?

Like any good wonderland, it needs a map. So let's take a tour.

Enter the gardens from the north and spot the distant skitter of skaters buzzing around Fitzy Bowl, otherwise known as **Skaters' Den** – running, dropping-in, falling, kick-flipping, flip-kicking and everything in between. The Council's redeveloped it to make it child-friendly, but you can never shake the sense of territorial ownership emanating from the young fellas who line the bench talking, drinking and laughing. Not that you would want them going anywhere. They're the Gardens' resident goblins, in the nicest of ways. And interestingly, they have their own rivalries with skaters who claim other sections of the park, like the Ticket Box at its south-western corner.

Just below Skaters' Den and near the playground is **Lovers' Cove**. This underrated pocket of the Gardens – barely anyone uses the nearby table-tennis table – is the go-to spot for people on Hinge dates who don't want to run into anyone they know near the more populated thoroughfares. It's also next to the public toilets, which makes the location slightly unseemly, but useful if the date's going really well.

A short walk from Lovers' Cove leads you to **Golden Meadows**, right in front of the Rotunda. This is where the nymphs and fairies reside. Slackliners attach ropes to trees and find perfect balance within. And on perfect days, the sun filters through the pretty green leafage, shifting and gliding across picnic rugs and bare legs and dappling the grass in gorgeous patterns. It feels like God is fluttering her eyes at you.

If you continue south you'll pass the **The Bowls Club**, no doubt hosting countless work Christmas parties this time of year. Wave gracefully to the drunken I.T consultants and carry on towards the Gardens' greatest architectural achievement: **The Grandstand**, which once doubled as a commune for the neighbourhood's homeless before the Council boarded up the entrances. It stands, of course, before the greatest amateur Australian Rules Football oval in this realm or beyond, on which our knights in shining armour bravely battle opposition forces from the eastern suburbs.

During football season, the grandstand's packed with club loyalists, volunteers and families. The young,

tattooed and frivolous opt, instead, for the magnificent vantage point from **Hipster Hill**, which looks out to passing trams and the city skyline. Just one lone bench sits atop it – like a small bird on an elephant's back – so most of the jesters and layabouts lie down on its green slope and bask in the sunlight.

Tucked alongside the greenery of Hipster Hill are the sweeping desert vistas offered by the red clay courts of

the **Fitzroy Tennis Club**. Descend the hill and you'll enter **The Dogfield**. If you're looking for fantastic beasts, this is where to find them. A kaleidoscope of different breeds – athletic whippets, intellectual poodles, those Rastafarian dogs with dreads – meet excitedly to sniff arses, chase balls and trade food-acquiring strategies.

Walk east and see the basketball court, populated by strikingly-talented amateur ballers making the chain





net swish in rhythm with the music pumping from their speakers. To the south is the great big fenced off playground with the red spinny-thing that sends overexcited Whizz-Fizz addicted seven-year-olds into nauseous fits.

North of the basketball court is the infamous **Worm's Lair**. The golden worm may have assumed legend status by now – North Fitzroy's answer to the Loch Ness Monster – but it once sat proudly atop that little plinth. Its slithery shadow

and slimy scent can still be registered on certain days in Edinburgh Gardens, to the chagrin of its detractors and the joy of its worshippers.

Above Worm's Lair, and taking up most of the north-eastern pocket of the gardens, is **The Dark Forest**. It's beautiful, but its goings-on can sometimes seem murky, and a journey through its heart can have one looking twice and doubling back. Did I just see something behind that tree? Probably,

Whether it was a person, a possum or a pixie, there's always something happening in Edinburgh Gardens.

For every local – from the Monday night frisbee players, to the woman who circumnavigates the oval while reading her book, to the man who rides his BMX to the basketball court – the park provides an escape, a home-away-from-home, our little green kingdom. It's no wonder people from all over are drawn to it for a brief taste of Utopia. This place is magic.

A rising tide lifts all bands

It might require a short wander southwards but it's worth it for Fitzroy's Old Bar, which champions the new

By Coco Veldkamp

“Yes – it’s a bit rough around the edges, but it’s full of heart.”

The Old Bar, nestled in a humble slot on Johnston St, Fitzroy, is a haven for emerging artists. Co-owner and band-booker Joel Morrison has an unwavering penchant for the undiscovered which has seen him foster countless bands from being essentially anonymous to integral to the scene.

Morrison has been at The Old Bar since he and two mates, Singajaya Unlayati and Liam Matthews, took over back in 2007. The trio had been managing The After Dark in Thornbury, but when The Old Bar came up for grabs, they couldn't resist the temptation to own their go-to venue.

Morrison, Unlayati and Matthews decided on a firm philosophy for how they wanted to run The Old Bar, which would see the space become a haven for the new and the alternative.

“We came at it specifically from the point of view of the bands. We wanted to make it a place where people could play, to make it as comfortable and easy as possible, and to keep it with the ethos of what was already embedded here. It’s a great sized room because it’s not so big that we have to pack it out and it’s not scary for new bands – so you’re not trying to fill The Corner Hotel on your first gig,” says Morrison.

The Goldilocks venue – cosy enough to be intimate but big enough for a fun time – has seen the likes of Eddy Current Suppression Ring, Cable Ties, King Gizzard and the Lizard Wizard and Courtney Barnett grace the stage. Some of them, it’s fair to say, have gone on to play at much bigger venues. But their roots are here, at The Old Bar – where the shows are more intimate, more intense and, according to Morrison – the best way to experience live music.

“It’s important to keep the scene alive to help these bands get a bigger audience.”

“In big spaces, you can feel a bit removed, whereas in a venue this size, you get a real sense that you are a part of the show. If you see a really good gig, you’re going to remember that for the rest of your life. I’m not necessarily talking about shows that are wild and packed with people hanging off the ceiling. You’d see a show like Ryan Downey, who used to play here, and there would be like four people watching it. You’d think ‘this is mine’, ‘this is my little special memory’. Things like that stand out for me,” Morrison explains.



Photo: Supplied

Open seven days a week with three or four bands taking the stage, The Old Bar doesn't sleep, and neither does Morrison. His work is endless but enormously rewarding to him.

“I like to go see bands that are hitting it at their peak but haven't yet reached that higher level – gigs where the band room is full but it's still super intimate. That's the jelly in the donut for me. That's the good bit. It's important to keep the scene alive to help these bands get a bigger audience,” Morrison says.

“One of the great things that I have enjoyed doing is, I don't just sit there and answer emails, I go out and chase bands. If there is a new band that I really like and I think they're good, but they haven't got the crowd yet, then I try and match them up with a bigger band that their crowd would like. So, they rise a level and still have allegiance to our venue. So, it works both ways - you've got to give people a hand”.

Morrison's mentality – that a rising tide raises all boats – extends beyond booking bands. He wants to see the whole scene flourish, including the other venues in the neighbourhood.

“I think the more live music venues the better. You get more people going out. You go from one venue to another venue. You see one band and you run off to another band. Because it is all quite close together you can easily do that. If you start feeling like you're competing with someone – then I think that you're in the wrong industry,” he says.

Morrison's dedication reflects not just a commitment to one venue but to a broader ethos of supporting the entire underground music scene. His passion for live music and uplifting emerging artists bleeds into the venue, creating an atmosphere of warmth and nostalgia, intensity and vigour.



Atelier Claire Taylor



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BARK, THE HERALD ANGELS SING

Our neighbourhood's most neurotic hound says dogs deserve better this Christmas

By Ludo

There's this ancient canine proverb some dogs like to quote: "Bark bark, bark bark bark, bark bark." The loose translation is something along the lines of: "Humans are a dog's best friend." I've heard you guys might have one similar.



It's a maxim that often holds true, but not always, because humans sometimes don't hold up' their end of the bargain. Let me explain.

In *The Rotunda's* Christmas edition last year I used this column to describe the wonderful, drunken night I spent with Santa's crew of reindeer. I was seeking friends from new species, and over the course of the evening I forged true connections with Prancer, Rudolph and co. We stay in regular contact, except for Blitzen. I won't go into it.

I expected the article to send a kind of message. But after it was published, not even one human reached out to see how I was doing. It seems no one can read between the lines anymore: "Hmm, it seems Ludo decided to spend his festive season getting blind-drunk with strangers rather than relaxing with his loved ones. Are anxiety and depression knocking the wind out of his normal extremely jolly self?"

The fact was, I couldn't handle the torture of home life in December – you know what I'm talking about. Dogs are left for dead while trees are unloaded, glass baubles dangled, and rolls of cheap wrapping paper shoved in corners where a canine or two once curled up. Not to mention the lacklustre walk regimen! You're lucky if you get a quick whip around

the footy oval since everyone's out buying JB Hifi gift vouchers, Mecca eyeshadow palettes and David Beckham cologne.

When me and my new reindeer pals departed last year I stumbled back into the house thinking I'd managed to beat my brain's emotional receptors into submission with gulp after gulp of whiskey (Dasher stole it from Santa's supply). Yay, I thought. I have successfully numbed myself to the pain of persistent neglect.

And yet when I waltzed into the family room on Christmas Eve and saw my family busy with their stockings, their Christmas music and their baked goods – left on the counter an inch farther from where I can get to – I realised something horrible: they hadn't even realised I'd left. And despite all my efforts to anaesthetise my soul, those receptors flared up once again: anger, sadness and shame dancing through my mind in rhythm with 'Last Christmas'.

"When Santa enters, I feel emasculated."

Bloody hell, I wanted that to be my last Christmas. Because this is what you don't realise: the festive season can truly be hard for dogs. We're used to the spotlight, especially as far as the animal kingdom is concerned. Suddenly, it's not about us anymore – it's about partridges in pear trees, turtle doves and seafood buffets.

Meanwhile, there are the kids. God, they love to f@#ing milk it this time of year. Constantly crying about Santa's naughty



and nice lists. Welcome to a dog's life, children! Over the course of one day a dog will be alternately told they are either good or bad about a thousand times. Every morning, we enter a vicious storm of shifting identity and wavering self-worth that would have the most hardened tradie clutching for tissues at therapy.

Meanwhile, dogs are security-conscious by nature. When a large man enters the premises via the chimney and we're expected to just let him walk on past without any territorial barking, it doesn't feel good. I personally find it quite emasculating. And then I'm forced to watch him eat the baked goods I couldn't get my paws on? It hurts. And the reindeer – much as I love them – can leave a half eaten carrot on the kitchen floor like it's a cutesy calling-card, whereas when I do it, boom, there it is: "Ludo, bad dog!"

Christmas has gone to the dogs. In the idiomatic sense – sadly not literally. That's

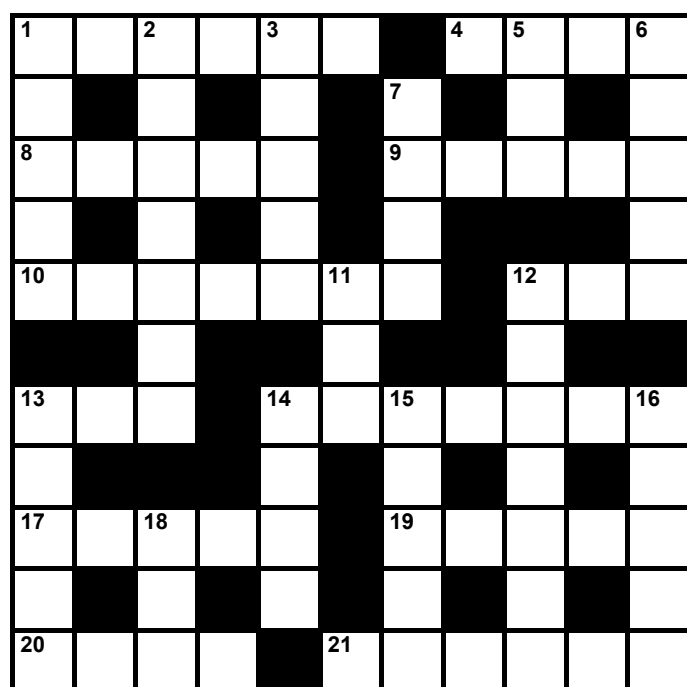
why I was fairly absent last Christmas. And I don't want this year to be the same, for any of us (a particularly insecure greyhound I know went fully off-grid and spent all of December running wild along the banks of the Merri Creek before returning, forever altered, on Boxing Day).

Now: how can you, as humans, make sure your dog feels okay? Yeah, a present would be nice – not a squeaky toy that will break in two minutes, but something we truly need: like a more comfortable collar, or a plush dog-bed, or a selection of fine meats from the deli at Piedimonte's.

Alternatively it could just come down to showing some extra affection. More cuddles, more walks, more treats. Sing us a hymn: 'Bark, the Herald Angels Sing...' You see, all we want is a little bit of appreciation. That's another one of our ancient proverbs: "Dogs are blessings, and blessed be the owners who love their dogs." This Christmas, count your blessings. Then pat them.

CROSSWORD by LR

#12



ACROSS

- 1 A little devil with a false head (6)
- 4 Data (4)
- 8 Opening bars (5)
- 9 To go 'ahead' (5)
- 10 Appal (7)
- 12 Needle source (3)
- 13 Greek letter (3)
- 14 Italian dessert (7)
- 17 _____ Hill, Western Sydney suburb (5)
- 19 Dashing masked vigilante who lives in California (5)
- 20 The unfortunate result of a bad argument (4)
- 21 Beer, colloquially (6)

DOWN

- 1 Chicken part (5)
- 2 Canadian province (7)
- 3 Actress Watts (5)
- 5 Negative conjunction (3)
- 6 None of the above (5)
- 7 Questionable (4)
- 11 To and ____ (3)

- 11 Capital of Cyprus (7)
- 12 New Zealand comic strip, _____ Flats (7)
- 13 Less common (5)
- 14 Santa's cargo (4)
- 15 Stubble remover (5)
- 16 Shade of white (5)
- 18 Away (3)

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Healthspan vs. Lifespan: The Role of Exercise

In the quest for longer and healthier lives, the concepts of healthspan and lifespan have gained significant attention. Healthspan refers to the period of one's life during which they are healthy, active, and free from chronic diseases and disabilities, while lifespan refers simply to its total duration.

Researchers and health experts are emphasising the importance of extending your healthspan, rather than just your lifespan. Essentially, it's about maximizing the number of years you live feeling a true sense of vitality and well-being. One key to this is exercise, particularly strength training.

Exercise is often described as a "miracle drug" for its wide-ranging benefits on physical and mental health. It contributes significantly to both healthspan and lifespan, but its impact on healthspan, in particular, is remarkable.

Here's why exercise, including strength training, is so crucial:

1. Muscular Strength and Function:

Strength training involves activities that make your muscles work against resistance. This can be in the form of free weights, resistance bands, or even your body weight. Engaging in regular strength training helps build and maintain muscle mass, which is essential for mobility and overall physical function, especially as you age. Strong muscles can reduce the risk of falls and fractures. Additionally, maintaining muscle mass can help stave off age-related muscle loss, known as sarcopenia. This is vital for preserving functional independence and overall well-being.

2. Metabolic Health: Exercise such as strength training improves metabolic health by regulating blood sugar levels. This is critical to the prevention of chronic conditions

like type 2 diabetes. When metabolic health is optimized, the risk of developing diabetes and related complications decrease.

3. Bone Health: Strength training is excellent for bone health. It increases bone density, which is especially crucial for older adults who may be at risk of osteoporosis and fractures. Maintaining strong bones ensures that you remain active and independent as you age.

4. Weight Management: Exercise, such as strength training, plays a vital role in weight management. It helps in burning calories, increasing lean muscle mass, and boosting metabolism. This is associated with a reduced risk of numerous chronic diseases, such as heart disease, certain cancers, and joint problems.

5. Cardiovascular Health: While strength training primarily focuses on the muscular system, it also



Strength training at Kieser

has positive cardiovascular effects. Some studies suggest that it can help reduce blood pressure and improve cholesterol profiles.

6. Cognitive Function: Exercise also has a profound impact on the brain. Regular physical activity has been linked to improved cognitive function, reduced risk of cognitive decline, and a lower likelihood of developing neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's.

7. Psychological Well-being: Physical activity such as strength training has been shown to reduce the risk of depression and anxiety, boost mood, and improve overall mental well-being.

Exercise, especially strength training, has a profound impact on muscle strength and function, metabolic health, bone health, weight management, cardiovascular health, cognitive function, and psychological well-

being. By incorporating regular exercise into your lifestyle, you can significantly enhance your healthspan, ensuring that your years are not just numerous but also characterized by vitality, independence, and overall well-being. So, lace up your sneakers, grab those dumbbells, and invest in your future healthspan today.

Kieser has a clinic on Brunswick Street in Fitzroy North and new clients are eligible for 50% off for their initial assessment. To learn more about Kieser, call 9445 7900 or visit kieser.com.au.



Fitzroy team with Freddie



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