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#### **Editor's Note**

As the end of another year approaches, it can be a time of reflection. It might be tempting this year to focus on the negatives of the past twelve months. Economic hardship, war, illness, loss of loved ones and even the dreadful weather are just some of the trials we may have had to face.

Although Christmas can't take any of these things away, it can offer a bit of escapism - the opportunity to leave behind the woes and cares of life for a short season and just enjoy being in the present. Of course, Christmas itself can bring added stress if we let it. But it doesn't have to be all singing and all dancing! As I get older, I realise that my fondest memories of Christmases gone by aren't about the food, drink or presents - they're about time spent with loved ones.

My best childhood Christmas was when my dad taught me to ride my new bike. A favourite teenage Christmas was when we visited my married brother in deep snow in the heart of West Yorkshire and my grandma slid under the car as she got out of it! As an adult I loved the year we bought Christmas crackets with whistles in them, and I conducted an impromptu orchestra of extended family members!

So, this year I sincerely wish you a happy Christmas. May we also reach out to anyone who may be alone or otherwise find Christmas difficult. Until the New Year!

Debbie Singh-Bhatti

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# What an Experience!

I love giving gifts but I hate choosing them, and increasingly my adult children seem to lack for nothing and are void of ideas about what they'd like to receive. So when a friend announced that she'd thrown herself out of an aeroplane to celebrate her 50th birthday, and that she had plans to ride a zip line for her next adventure, it gave me the idea to gift experiences instead of tangible items such as gadgets, clothes, cosmetics and jewellery.

Experiences, whether shared or given for someone to enjoy solo, have the unique capacity to bring people closer. They create stories and memories that can be cherished and revisited long after a physical gift may have lost its lustre or fallen into disuse.

In addition, experiences can contribute to personal growth and learning - whether it's mastering a new skill, discovering a hidden talent, or gaining a new perspective - and from an environmental perspective, they leave a much lighter ecological footprint.

Here are ten ideas that could make for memorable and thoughtful presents:

Cooking Class: Perfect for the foodie or aspiring chef, a cooking class can be a fun way to learn new culinary skills and recipes.

Hot Air Balloon Ride: A unique and exhilarating experience for those who appreciate a touch of adventure and breathtaking views.

**Concert Tickets:** Music lovers would cherish the opportunity to see their favourite artist or band live in concert.

Art or Craft Workshop: A session with a local artist can be a wonderful gift for the creatively inclined.

**Spa Day**: Offer the gift of relaxation and pampering with a day at a spa, complete with massages, facials, and other treatments.

A Masterclass subscription: For the lifelong learners, a subscription to an online platform like Masterclass allows them to delve into a variety of subjects taught by experts.

**Theme Park Annual Pass:** For rollercoaster-lovers. It provides a year's worth of fun.

**Theatre Tickets:** A night out at a play, musical, or dance performance can be a culturally enriching experience.

**Wine Tasting Tour:** A tour of a vineyard with wine tasting is a delightful experience for wine

aficionados.

Adventure Sports
Experience: For the thrillseekers, consider gifting an
experience like skydiving,
scuba diving, or rock
climbing.

Other gifts I've experienced are a trip to an escape room and afternoon tea. So why not gift your loved one an experience this year?

**Louise Addison** 



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# **Bag a Great Christmas**

The story of my life can be told in the handbags I have owned. In my tiny, trendy youth I carried a tiny, trendy beaded pouch. As a student I switched to practical-but-cool leather rucksacks. Through the years I gained two degrees, one husband, four children, two grandchildren, a dog, and a larger handbag... much larger!

The amount of stuff I now lug around on a daily basis is more than I once took on a two-week trip around Europe when I was 18. Make-up for starters (who knows when I might run into Hugh Jackman at the post office?), a mobile phone, spare tights (me), scrunchie (granddaughter), spare pants (grandson), tissues, baby wipes, a set of keys that would put a prison officer to shame, a purse of gargantuan proportions (though sadly lacking in cash), a notebook and wi-fi-enabled tablet (because I'm a writer and inspiration may strike at any moment), my Kindle, assorted pens, glasses (one pair for driving and another for reading), a hairbrush, and several plastic cast members from the series Paw Patrol. I bet I'm not unusual either.

My life (and clearly the lives of some of my family members) reside in my over-sized bag, but while fine for everyday purposes, when I go

out in the evening I face a dilemma. My outfit would benefit from a petite, chic clutch, but which bits of paraphernalia can I do without for 4 whole hours? So, for all who struggle I have devised a definitive and minimalist evening bag contents list...

**Lipstick/gloss**: An absolute must to keep your pout looking perfect throughout the evening.

Compact mirror: Useful for quick make-up adjustments and contact lens emergencies.

**Coin purse**: Ditch your usual purse with its useful pockets and pouches, for a dinky coin purse in which to keep your cash for the evening.

**Mobile phone**: Doubles as a camera which is handy to capture those rare child-free moments.

Blister plasters: These special plasters are lifesavers when breaking in new shoes and, even if you don't need them, they'll make you very popular when others are hobbling.

Mints: Whether you're single or part of a couple, if you're hoping to steal a few kisses under the mistletoe, keep your breath fresh throughout the evening.

Your house key: You don't need to take the whole bunch, just remove the one you need. If you're not driving, do remember to take the number of a reliable taxi firm, just in case your lift falls through.

And the bag? With evening bags anything goes. Sequins and sparkles, buttons and bows, funky or sophisticated, whatever your style, your bag should make a statement. Now go and bag some festive fun!

Sarah Davey

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At the end of the day the old adage that happy customers

lead to more happy customers is true and we work hard to make that happen for every installation we carry out!

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big or small, call Warren on 0800 612 8359 and he'll be happy to pop round and give you a no obligation quote so you too can make use of your



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# **A Song Through Time**

Christmas carolling, the beloved tradition that heralds the festive season, is steeped in history, and has evolved over centuries. It is an embodiment of communal spirit, joy, and the celebration of Christmas through song and verse.

During pagan times, people would dance and sing to celebrate the Winter Solstice. As Christianity spread across Europe, these customs were absorbed into the celebration of Christmas.

The word 'carol' originally meant a dance or a song of praise and joy, and they were not necessarily associated with Christmas. However, by the late Middle Ages carols became synonymous with the festive season, often narrating the story of the birth of Christ. These early carols were composed in Latin and were primarily sung in churches as part of the Christmas liturgy.

The tradition of door-to-door carolling began to take shape in the Middle Ages. Carollers, known as 'wassailers', would go from house to house, singing and offering good tidings in exchange for food, drink, or money (think, "Bring us a figgy pudding and a cup of good cheer!"). Wassailing was part of a wider tradition of celebrating the season, which included feasting, drinking, and merriment.

The practice of carolling saw a decline during the 17th century when Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans came to power in England. They frowned upon the frivolity and celebrations associated with Christmas, leading to a suppression of carols and public festivities. However, the tradition did not die out entirely



and continued in more subdued forms.

The Victorian era marked a significant revival of Christmas traditions, including carolling. The publication of 'Christmas Carols Ancient and Modern' by William Sandys in 1833, along with Queen Victoria's enthusiasm for Christmas, helped rekindle interest in carols. Songs like God Rest Ye Merry, Gentlemen, The First Noel, and Hark! The Herald Angels Sing became staples of the Christmas repertoire.

In contemporary times, carolling remains very much part of Christmas celebrations. Community choirs sing carols in public spaces, churches hold candlelit carol services, and groups of carollers continue the tradition of singing door-to-door, although nowadays it's more likely to be pre-arranged visits to hospitals and nursing homes for example.

The history of Christmas carolling is a tapestry woven through centuries of cultural and religious change but the essence of spreading cheer and goodwill through music has remained unchanged.

Louise Addison

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# The Morning After...

The pounding head, the nausea, the dizziness, and the shakes. They can mean only one thing... no, you're not coming down with COVID for the third time - it's the morning after the night before and you have a hangover.

Across the centuries and around the globe some very peculiar hangover cures have been formulated. For example, Mongolians swear by a concoction of pickled sheep's eyeballs washed down with a brine and tomato juice cocktail. Sorry, did that make you feel worse? How about this less revolting but equally

bizarre remedy from ancient Ireland: hangover sufferers should be buried neck-deep in damp river sand!

Or you could make the famous 'Prairie Oyster': carefully crack an egg into a glass without breaking the yolk. Add a dash of Worcestershire sauce and swallow whole. Oh dear, that's making me think of the

sheep's eves again!

More sensible, but less dramatic, is to take the recommended dose of Paracetamol with lots of water. Then drink some more water and take an antacid to settle your stomach. If possible, go back to bed. When you're ready to eat, have a banana to replace minerals lost due to alcohol, or have a good fry-up if you prefer. Other recommended mineral-rich foods are pickles or canned fish... but it's understandable if you don't want to try these. Get outside for some fresh air too.

> Of course, the only way to avoid a hangover is not to drink alcohol, but hev, it's Christmas! So maybe drink in moderation, don't mix your tipples, and alternate with soft drinks. That way you'll enjoy a hangover-free party season!

> > Tom Hancock



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Tales
From
The
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By
Fiona
Lau



It's been just over a year since I began my own personal couch to fitness journey. I started from a *very* low base, ie on my sofa, only rising from it to reach for the remote or to trek to the kitchen for much needed sustenance. I had decided that having high cholesterol, osteoarthritis, a propensity to succumb to every passing virus, and some medium Covid with a bit of an attitude, I should just recline on my sofa, watch Corrie, and wait for the grim reaper to come knocking at my door.

However, some friends belonged to a local gym, and gradually I began to think that a final roll of the health dice, involving the gym, might offer a glimmer of hope. Here are some of the results for the past year:

- ALL my health indicators (except my waist which is determined to be a work in progress) are now within the unheard of NORMAL range!
- I am off my medication.
- Under the tuition of my Strength and Conditioning class coach I have progressed from my own pink Barbie weights to lifting 10-12 kgs dumbbells.
- I survive weekly cycling spinning classes and have the thighs to prove it.
- I have gained several new friends.
- I now have sufficient stamina to comfortably

complete regular 10-13 mile walks with my Rambler group. I'm not at the back moaning any more.

- I have bought new workout leggings TWO sizes smaller than my elderly originals.
- I have lost, with the help of gym classes and Weight Watchers, 50 lbs.
- I can almost keep up with my grandchildren!

I am not running marathons or featuring in articles such as Super Gran etc but I have learned a thing or two:

- Choose a form of exercise that you will enjoy. It could be the gym, dance, swimming, walking, running or a sport.
- Find a friend or a group of friends to do this exercise with as their encouragement/ banter will keep you going in the dark months of November to February.
- Choose something that you can access easily and relatively cheaply. I found a nearby gym at a good rate for my 'senior' age group and headed off there with my tatty Matalan leggings, a souvenir holiday T shirt and some battered trainers. They still let me in!

You never know, you might enjoy exercising! What have you got to lose? Go for it. It is NEVER too late for anyone. Goodbye for now, and good luck!





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# **MySlimmingDiary**

## A Little Extra Effort...

I've mentioned before that I go swimming and that I am one of the slowest in the pool. I often wonder why. What makes one person fast and another slow, when they both appear to be performing the same action?

Last week I got to the pool late and didn't have time to complete my usual 32 lengths. I swam the first sixteen in my usual 20 minutes, but then decided to conduct an experiment. Could I increase my output if I made a few changes to my swimming style?

I identified five actions which I thought might make a difference to my speed. The result was that I swam the next 12 lengths in just 13.5 minutes instead of the usual fifteen! I'm not sure which adjustment made the difference, or if it was them all, but then I got to thinking that the same principle might apply to my slow weight loss.

Maybe I THINK I'm doing everything right, but perhaps making some adjustments could bring in better results. I identified five factors that affect weight loss (scientifically backed - not made up by me!) and have resolved to try a little harder in

all of them.

The first is to not only stick to my calorie budget, but to eat lots of fresh fruit, vegetables, lean meat, fish and poultry and limit foods high in carbs, sugar and fat.

Next is to make sure I drink 6-8 glasses of fluid a day. I rarely achieve this but I know people who swear by it as a real game changer!

Third, get enough sleep. I usually fall asleep after midnight and am often awake by 6 am. I'm planning to get to bed earlier, avoid looking at devices for an hour before bed and aim for at least 7 hours sleep a night.

Fourth, limit my stress levels. I don't feel I am a particularly stressed person, but I've decided to work on relaxation anyway by taking up yoga again. It can only do me good!

**Vital Statistics** Height: 5ft 6ins

Starting weight: 18st 3lbs Weight now: 12st 9lbs Weight Lost: 5st 8lbs

Finally, exercise more! I've recommitted to swimming twice a week and with the help of knee braces and muscle strengthening exercises I'm going to take up running again.

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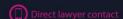
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I love hellebores. Their beautiful flowers in subtle colours brighten my garden at this time of year, hence they are also known as the Christmas Rose or the Lenten Rose because they bloom from late winter to early spring. My elderly neighbour was admiring my display last year and asked if I knew the folk story of The Christmas Hellebore Miracle. Well, I love a good story, so I asked her to tell me.

In a forgotten corner of the world, shrouded in perpetual winter, there lay a village with an unpronounceable name. The villagers never knew the warmth of the sun, nor the vibrant hues of spring. Their world was an endless canvas of white, save for a brief season when the Christmas Star would appear and cast a faint, ethereal glow.

In the village there lived an old herbalist named Helmi, known for her wisdom in healing and her knowledge of plants. But of all the plants, Helmi cherished the Hellebores the most. These

# The Christmas Hellebore

rare flowers bloomed in the heart of winter, defying the frost with their resilient beauty.

One particularly harsh Christmas Eve, a mysterious ailment fell upon the children of the village. One by one, they succumbed to a deep slumber, their breaths as faint as the whispering wind and no remedy seemed able to wake them.

In desperation, the villagers turned to Helmi. The old herbalist thought deeply. She had read in ancient scrolls of a forgotten ritual, one that could summon the healing grace of the Christmas Star itself. But to perform it, she needed a bloom from the rarest of all the Hellebores, one kissed by the Christmas Star's shining light.

Under the watchful gaze of the Christmas Star, Helmi ventured into the heart of the frozen forest, guided only by the star's gentle luminescence. Deep within the woods, she found a solitary Hellebore, its petals aglow with a celestial radiance. Carefully she plucked the bloom, whispering words of gratitude.

Returning to the village, Helmi crushed the petals of the starkissed Hellebore and mixed them with many herbs and

snowmelt to create a potion of shimmering silver. One by one, she visited the villagers' houses. and painted a tiny star on the forehead of each sleeping child.

As the potion touched their skin, a miracle unfolded. The children began to stir, cheeks flushing with life's warmth. The villagers, once cloaked in despair, now embraced in jubilation. Their tears, once cold with sorrow, now warmed by relief.

From that day forth, the villagers held a Hellebore festival every vear on Christmas Eve with Helmi as their honoured quest. They planted the beautiful resilient little flowers all over the village throughout the year, and every Christmas Eve as the Star returned to the heavens, the villagers hung hellebore wreaths intertwined with stars on the doors of their houses. Then they would gather to sing carols of gratitude and hope, their voices carrying the tale of the little Hellebore that held the light of the stars in its petals and the love of a village in its roots.

Isn't that lovely? She said that her grandmother told it to her as a child and she's loved hellebores ever since.

Rachael Leverton



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# **YourRecipe**

# Lentil Roast

A tasty vegetarian alternative for Christmas dinner!

Preparation time 20 mins Cooking Time 1 hour Serves 6

#### Ingredients

250 g split red lentils
500 ml vegetable stock
1 bay leaf
125 g grated Cheddar cheese
1 leek, chopped finely
125 g mushrooms, chopped finely
90 g fresh wholemeal breadcrumbs
2 tbsp chopped fresh /1 tbsp dried parsley
1 tbsp lemon juice
2 eggs, beaten lightly
Salt and pepper

#### Method

Put the lentils, stock and bay leaf in a pan, bring to the boil, cover and simmer for 15-20

minutes until all the liquid is absorbed and the lentils have

softened. Discard bay leaf.

Meanwhile, base line a 1 kg loaf tin with baking parchment. Grease with butter/marg.

Stir the cheese, leek, mushrooms, fresh breadcrumbs and parsley into the lentils.

Bind together with the lemon juice and eggs. Season as required and turn into loaf tin. Smooth the top and bake in a preheated oven at 190°C/170°C fan/375°F/Gas Mark 5 for 1 hour until set and golden.

Loosen the loaf with a palette knife, turn onto a warmed plate and serve sliced, with roast vegetables and all the trimmings!





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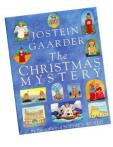
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#### YourBookReview



#### THE CHRISTMAS MYSTERY

Gaarder is an author renowned for weaving intricate philosophical musings into compelling narratives. His best-known novel is probably *Sophie's World*, but here he gifts readers with a story that at its

heart is an advent calendar in prose, where every chapter unlocks a door to the mystery of Christmas.

Beginning in modern-day Norway, the tale unravels as young Joachim discovers a magical advent calendar in an old bookstore. As he opens each window, not only does he unveil a portion of the Nativity story, but he also follows the journey of a little girl named Elisabet, who somehow travels back in time to Bethlehem. This dual narrative connects the ancient past to the present, reminding readers of the timeless resonance of the Christmas story.

Gaarder's prose manages to make the vast journey across time and space seem intimate. The cast of historical figures and the diverse landscapes they traverse offer a panoramic view of human history, all leading to that poignant moment in Bethlehem. Through Elisabet's innocent eyes, readers experience the wonder, challenges, and humanity that has always surrounded this sacred event.

Beyond its captivating story, the book is also a reflection on faith, hope and human connection. While it may appear to be a children's book on the surface, its layers of meaning will resonate deeply with readers of all ages. I came to it as an adult and love it every bit as much as Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Like Dickens' work, it serves as a delightful reminder of the profound significance of the Christmas story, and I think it is a must-read during the holiday season.

**Tash Donovan** 





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# YourSay

#### IBIS - Arts and Crafts

2023 has been a very successful year for our group and we would like to thank all our supporters for their help.

Thanks go in particular to Your Mag for allowing us space to encourage new members to join our welcoming group, the Co-op for its funding and goodie bag, Anston Parish Council for funding and assisting us with an ever changing table set up, and of course all our new members who return week after week to enjoy a myriad of arts and crafts.

After a short recess from mid-December we will re-open on Wednesday, 3 January 2024 to explore more exciting projects.

For more information please contact our Secretary Sue Sayles on <u>roysayles123@btinternet.com</u> or 01909 564891.

#### **Gold Star Award**

I decided to try the new bakery on Park Street. I looked up the street and saw that there was a vehicle parked halfway on the pavement and thought I would be able to get through on my scooter, but I hadn't noticed that there were some steps sticking onto the pavement. Although my scooter is a Quingo and will climb up a kerb there just wasn't enough room, and of course there were no drop kerbs, which locally are as rare as rocking horse droppings!

My faith in today's youth was fully restored by the lads who helped me off my scooter, parked me against the wall, turned my scooter around and helped me back onto my chariot. To add to my experience, a young lady asked what I was going to the shop for. I said I was hoping for a jam cream scone. She ran off and returned with a very tasty scone but would not let me pay her so my sincere thanks to all involved in my rescue.

Mayis Thomas

#### Celebrating December

Rotherham u3a's December festivities begin at 7.30 pm on 1st December, when the Choir holds its eagerly anticipated Christmas Concert at Herringthorpe United Reformed Church. As always, it promises to be a not-to-be-missed occasion featuring a medley of Christmas music, old and new. Why not come along? All are welcome. Tickets are £7.50, via Julie Thorp 07733 262 080. As usual, all proceeds go to a local charity.

Throughout December, most u3a activity groups hold their own celebrations, but the 15<sup>th</sup> December is members' party day. After a festive meal, the Singing for Fun and Ukulele groups each present a medley of seasonal and other songs, prompting an enthusiastic sing-along. Singing for Fun's energetic rendition of a humorous version of "The Twelve Days of Christmas" is an annual treat. The Ukulele group, fresh from their Christmas "tour" of various local community groups, will add their tuneful mix of melodies old and new to make this a fun-filled festive occasion.

Learn, Laugh and Live with the u3a. For more information, visit u3asites.org.uk/rotherham or call 01709 379 379.

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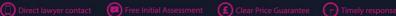
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## YourPuzzlePage

#### Crossword

0102211010											
1		2			3	4		5		6	7
				8							
9								10			
11						12					
											13
14		15					16				
						17					
	18							19		20	
21											
22						23					
24									25		

## Sudoku

#### How to play Sudoku

It's simple! Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3 x 3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 with no repetition. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive!

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

Solutions on Page 34

#### Across

- 1 Not dangerous (4)
- 3 Erect, upright (8)
- 9 Acrobat's swing (7)
- 10 Bowl, container (5)
- 11 Bare, in the buff (5)
- 12 Appeared, gave the impression (6) 7 Touch down (4)
- 14 Removed impurities (6)
- 16 Substance, material (6)
- 18 Indirect route (6)
- 19 Title, label (5)
- 22 Type of seafood (5)
- 23 Indian rice-based dish (7)
- 24 Lady-love, paramour (8)
- 25 Assistant (4)

#### Down

- 1 Devil-worshipper (8)
- 2 Thermos / vial (5)
- 4 Nevertheless (4,2)
- 5 Mealtime etiquette (5,7)
- 6 Most snug (7)
- 8 Tailor, seamstress (12)
- 13 Fame, influence (8)
- 15 Antennae (7)
- 17 Families, clans (6)
- 20 Florida city, seaside resort (5)
- 21 Bathed, moved through the water (4)

#### Word Search

Can you find the festive words hidden in the grid?

**CANDY CAROLS** CANDLES. CHIMNEY **CHRISTMAS ELVES** FAIRY **FAMILY FESTIVE** 

FRANKINCENSE **FRUITCAKE** GOLD. HOLLY JOLLY **MERRY** MISTLETOE MYRRH NATIVITY

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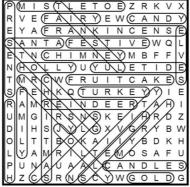
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#### **PUZZLE SOLUTIONS**





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

Solution to December Quick Crossword

Solution December Word Search

Solution to December Sudoku

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A small, family owned business since 1968 offering... Quality, Value For Money & Old Fashioned Service





A name associated for over 50 years with fitted Carpets, Laminates, Vinylay and Floorings

We are proud to support British industry. Over 95% of carpets we sell are British made, which means that we have avoided the big price increases experienced since 'Brexit' by companies selling carpets made in Europe and other parts of the world. We will continue to support British industry and offer the best value to our customers.





ABINGDON

ORDER NOW FOR GUARANTEED FITTING BEFORE CHRISTMAS









**MERRY CHRISTMAS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!** 





CORMAR



Been putting off replacing carpets due to no help with furniture? Need to remove old carpet first? No need to worry - we will do all this for you!



#### **FREE FITTING**

on all carpets £19.95 sq yd or over with the exception of border fitting, carpet tiles and stick down carpeting. Minimum order value £350

375 East Bawtry Road, Whiston S60 4EP (JUST BELOW THE HIND PUB)

(JUST BĚLOW THỂ HIND PUB) **Tel: 01709 371515** 

OPEN MONDAY-FRIDAY 10-5, SATURDAY 10-3 www.johnhughescarpets.co.uk

#### HOME SERVICE

Our representative will call day or evening to give you a free estimate, with no obligation, commitment or pressure showing you a good selection of carpet and vinyl.

**201709 371515**