



The Bristol Gulls crew.

Victory in an unusual boat

A team of four women from Bristol, England, have completed a 3,000-mile rowing race in a boat made from recycled plastic bottles. The Bristol Gulls crossed the Atlantic Ocean by sailing from the Canary Islands to Antigua in 46 days. Their boat was made from a range of recycled plastics, including plastic bottles. They are the first people to sail the Atlantic in such a vessel. The crew raised money for the lifeboat service and a campaign to clean up Bristol Harbour.



The dinosaur footprint.

Girl discovers dino footprint

A four-year-old girl has found a 220-million-year-old dinosaur footprint on a beach in south Wales. Lily Wilder spotted it while walking with her family along Bendor Beach in Barry. The print was preserved in rock and is 10 centimetres long. Although scientists don't know which type of dinosaur left it there, it is thought to have been around 75 centimetres tall. The ancient footprint has been taken to the National Museum Wales in Cardiff for safekeeping.



A European bison.

UK bison rangers wanted

A project to reintroduce wild European bison requires two rangers to look after the animals. Kent Wildlife Trust and Wildwood Trust are planning to bring a small herd of the animals to Blean Woods, in Kent, England, next year. Wild bison are Europe's largest land mammals, and they used to live in the UK up to 15,000 years ago. Applicants for the job need experience of dealing with cattle. They will carry out health checks on the bison and show visitors around.



DID YOU KNOW?

People who like to do jigsaw puzzles are called "dissectologists".

Jigsaw puzzles surge in popularity

Jigsaw sales are soaring in popularity in the UK, as people spend more time at home because of the coronavirus outbreak. Sales reached £100 million in 2020 – a 38% increase on the previous year.

Frédérique Tutt, who is an expert on the toy industry, says these sales figures are "totally unheard of". Jigsaw puzzles proved so popular that makers ran out of stock in the spring, and again just before Christmas.

One shop that experienced this surge in sales first-hand was The Yorkshire Jigsaw Store in the town of Easingwold in North Yorkshire, England. The manager, Joe Rushton, says that in March 2020 there was a huge rise in demand, which meant that he had to work for 16–18 hours each day to keep up. The store has now taken on more staff and receives orders from around the world. Rushton says that popular designs include the Tour de Yorkshire cycle race and Scarborough seafront. Meanwhile, JHG Jigsaws in Dorset, England, had its best year since opening in 1997.

The German toy company Ravensburger also sold a large number of jigsaw puzzles in the UK last year; one of its most popular designs was a cosy shed. The company's chairman, Clemens Maier, says puzzles have helped "lots of people find a balance in their

lives, especially in a time of crisis". The most popular format was the 1,000-piece jigsaw, but Ravensburger says that demand for even more challenging puzzles is increasing.

The very first jigsaw puzzle was made by a British cartographer (person who makes maps) called John Spilsbury in 1766. He cut maps into pieces, which people

would then have to put together again. These "dissected maps" were sold to families as a way for parents to teach their children geography.

In the summer, Tutt predicts that the popularity of puzzles will fall because people will probably spend more time outdoors and travel again. "But some will stay because they enjoyed the me-time or screen-free downtime," she says.



One of the first jigsaw puzzles.

THE WEEK'S SILLIEST HEADLINE

"Scientists have taught spinach to send emails" *euronews.com*



Jigsaw puzzles surge in popularity

Once you have read the article, try any of the following activities...

Hold a debate

Jigsaws have provided great entertainment to past generations, but have they had their day? Surely, the only reason they have made a comeback this year is because of lockdown when parents were reluctant to let their children spend too much time in front of a screen. Jigsaws originally went out of fashion simply because electronic games are more fun and easier to set up. Or is it more accurate to say that this year has helped to wean people off their screen dependencies? After all, there comes a time at which you just want to do something real ... something that doesn't beep and flash at you. What's more, there is a sense of satisfaction you get when completing a puzzle that exceeds anything you get on an electronic game. What do you think?

Writing challenge!

Choose one of the following writing warm-ups.

1 Write a playscript, dramatizing an imagined conversation between a toy company manager and a game inventor who has just thought up the idea of the jigsaw puzzle. Be as serious or humorous as you like but convey the feelings on both sides of the conversation as the inventor tries to sell the idea of pictures that have been cut up just so that they can be put back together again. Remember to use the conventions of a playscript.

or

2 Imagine that all electronic devices suddenly stopped working all at once. Write a list of your top five things that people could do to keep themselves entertained instead. For each one, write a sentence or two explaining what is involved and why it is such fun.

Investigate

Research how jigsaw puzzles were originally made (and got their name) then write a set of instructions to explain to someone else how to make one. Remember to use all the conventions of instructional writing, including imperative verbs and sequencing adverbials.

