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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION**Billericay. It's been a very difficult few weeks. Early in March I received a phone call telling me my Aunt Caroline had died unexpectedly. She was only 62 years old, had just retired and was looking forward to enjoying it with her husband and family. It's a devastating blow for our family but I learnt to never take anything or anyone for granted. Losing my aunt has made me realise I have to make the time to call my parents more regularly. I need to really appreciate good moments with my wife, friends and siblings. Life teaches us all lessons, some much more difficult than others to understand. I can't think of a more fitting tribute to my Aunt Caroline or indeed to anyone we've lost than to wring out every drop of life while we can. To enjoy, love and never take tomorrow as a given. So pick up your phone and call that friend you haven't spoken to in ages, smile at a stranger, give your kids an extra big hug and tell your loved ones you love them. In local news this month, a new leisure facility could be built in Billericay, advice is given to pet owners after a cat's body is found and we have news from the Street Pastors. I hope you enjoy reading this month's edition of **VISION**Billericay.

Nik

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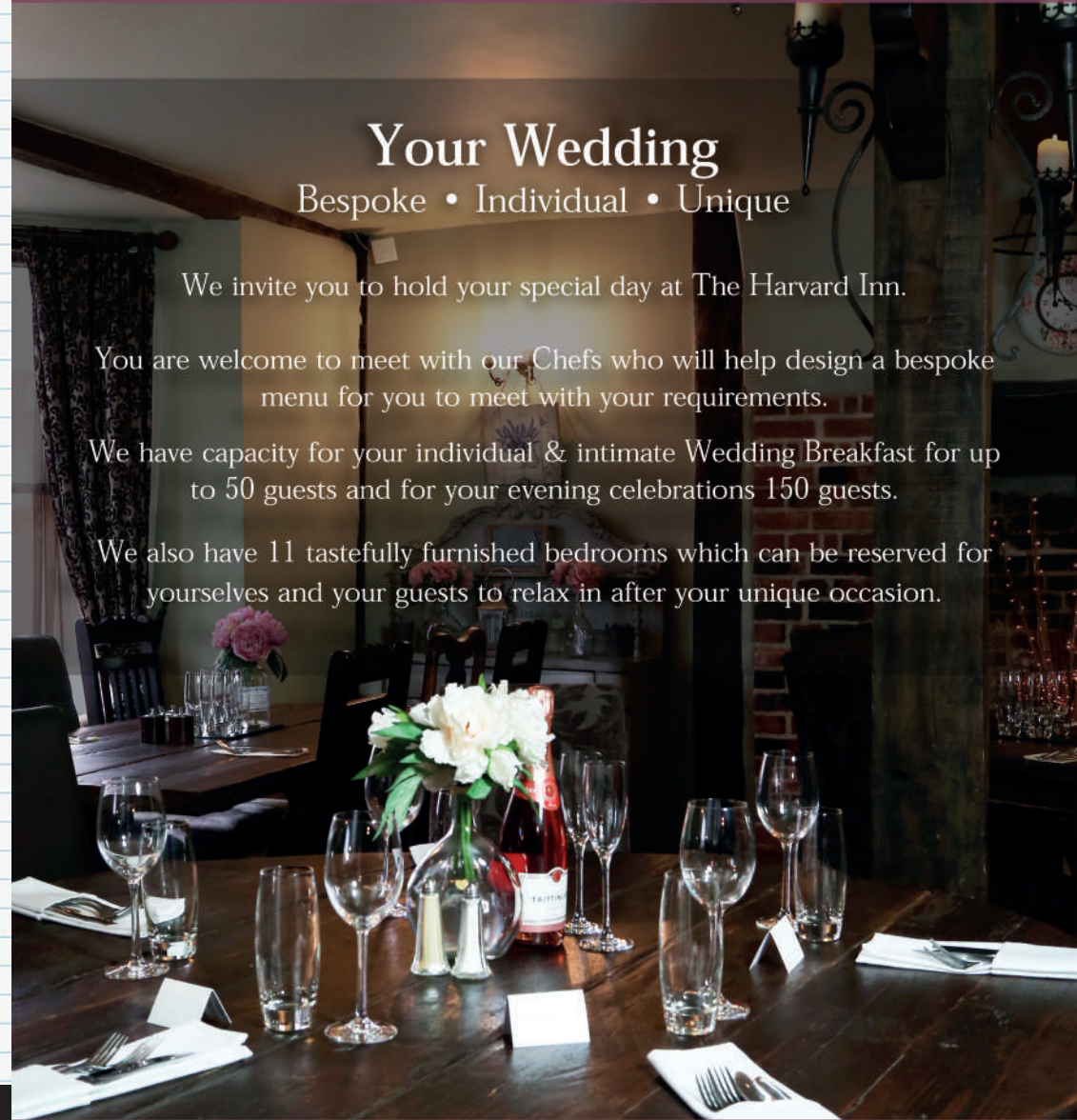
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She wears THE CROWN

Having portrayed Her Majesty for two seasons in Netflix series *The Crown*, Claire Foy has her sights set on some of the biggest roles in Hollywood in what's set to be her biggest year so far, but will she have pay equality on her side?

Every jobbing actor knows that it only takes a single role to dramatically transform your career. In the case of Claire Foy, that once-in-a-lifetime opportunity came when portraying one of the most iconic women of the last century, when the Buckinghamshire-raised beauty was asked to play Queen Elizabeth II in hit Netflix series *The Crown*. Overnight, she became one of the hottest stars on the planet, as everyone from Helen Mirren to Elton John rushed to heap praise on the 33-year-old.

But with recognition – and a Golden Globe award for Best Actress – comes inevitable tumult and change, and like the person she embodied with such impeccable steely grace, the actress has had to adjust to life in the spotlight, with 2018 already bringing a raft of perhaps unexpected challenges. In February it was announced that she and husband of four years, actor Stephen Campbell Moore, would be going their separate ways. “We have separated and have been for some time. We do however continue as great friends with the utmost respect for one another,” read the joint statement from the pair, who share their three-year-old daughter, Ivy Rose.

Then, weeks later, it transpired that Foy was paid less than Matt Smith, who played the Queen's husband, the Duke of Edinburgh, in *The Crown*, landing the actress right in the middle of the current gender pay gap furore. In the end, the show's producers Suzanne Mackie and Andy Harries claimed that Smith earned more per episode because he was a much bigger when the series began. They had a point, given that Smith was Doctor Who for four years up to 2014, but noted that for the third series the deficit would be rectified, stating: “Going forward, no one gets paid more than the Queen.”

Not that Foy cares one jot about the third series, as she won't be in it. Instead, *Broadchurch* star Olivia Colman will don the hefty jewels as the series jumps forward to the Seventies, seeing much of the cast replaced for older actors. But having catapulted her career into the stratosphere, *The Crown* has done enough for Foy to ensure she won't be short of offers for the foreseeable future, as the focus turns to Hollywood, with two huge releases set for this year.

First up, she will portray the earth-bound wife of Ryan Gosling's Neil Armstrong in Damien (La La Land) Chazelle's *First Man*, followed by the highly coveted lead in *The Girl in the Spider's Web* – the much-delayed reboot of the Stieg Larsson *Millennium* series. As the formidable Lisbeth Salander – last played by Rooney Mara in *The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo* – Foy will appear pierced, inked and in full leathers as she takes on Russian criminal organisation The Spider Society.

But first, the mercurial star will simply be enjoying some downtime as she shrugs off those royal robes for the very last time and focuses on being “a normal mum”. “It's the role I cherish most,” she states, and surely no amount of money comes close to it.



Free

EDUCATION FOR ALL?

Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party is the latest to float the idea of scrapping university fees in England. But is free education a viable economic option, or just a perennial political pipe dream?

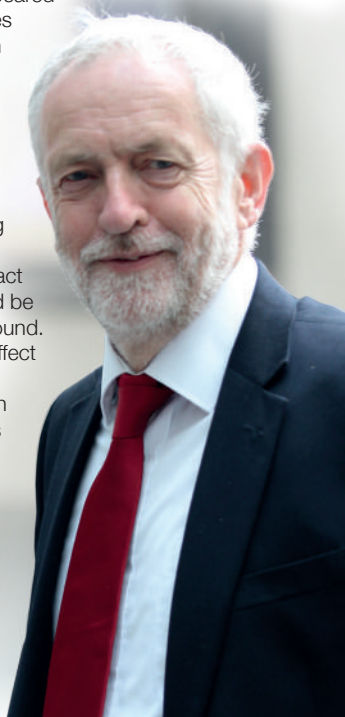
It's an issue that often makes or breaks politicians - whether or not the idea of free university education is economically possible. Since the tuition fees of £9,000 a year appeared in 2012, the debate over free education has intensified. With some universities now charging £9,250 across 12 months, with a 6 per cent interest rate on loans also applicable, more and more students are emerging from university with crippling debts that they may never shake.

This is one of the many reasons why Jeremy Corbyn's Labour has made the announcement to scrap tuition fees if they get into power - but is it really that simple? The idea of free education undoubtedly carries an almost universal appeal among younger voters especially, but the abolition of university fees would realistically lead to there being a need for money coming in from elsewhere to make up that gap.

The benefits of more people going to university, most argue, lie in the fact more graduates create a better skilled workforce and higher education would be available and affordable to everyone regardless of economic or social background. But figures show that the introduction of £9,000 fees didn't have a negative effect on poorer school-leavers attending university.

Some countries in Europe already offer students a free education. Scottish students, for example, get free university tuition if they study in the country. It is also available to all students in Norway regardless of study level or nationality, international students in France and students in Austria.

Essentially, whilst free education is a political masterstroke in terms of its appeal, the recent history of the Liberal Democrats should act as a warning for any party willing to stake its reputation on this policy. Viable alternatives, such as a scrapping of interest owed, or the better promotion of vocational training, may, in the long run, ease the financial burden on graduates and still keep skilled workers available.



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Tired of crayoned walls and stained carpets? Here's how to choose kiddie proof decor.

Whether you've got a bundle of joy on the way, or already have a tearaway or two running amok in your home, you'll be fully aware of the need to consider the small people when decorating or furnishing your house. Children are a wonderful addition to any home, of course, but even the best-behaved ones will have the odd moment of absentmindedness, usually right in the middle of devouring a chocolate ice cream cone.

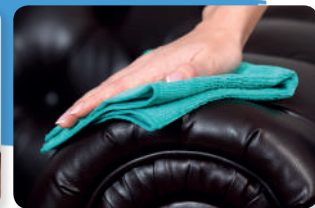
If you have the luxury of starting fresh with your décor, then be sure to choose hardwearing fabrics. Carpets, particularly light ones, won't serve you well, so go for lino or well-maintained wood floors. You can then buy rugs to add cosiness and sound proofing, preferably ones that can be easily washed and are patterned to disguise spillages.

When it comes to walls, wipeable paint is your new best friend. Matte finishes tend to lock dirt in,

so choose gloss, eggshell and satin. If your child is a determined artist, it may be worth painting one wall or door with blackboard paint, so they have a space to create their magic/mess.

In terms of furniture, leather is preferable as it's wipe-clean, and if you already have a fabric sofa it's worth buying a few easy-care throws and blankets for protection. Equally if you have a wooden kitchen table, you will definitely need an everyday table cloth you can whip off for special occasions. Cut-to-size PVC fabric is perfect as it often comes in bright stylish patterns and is practically indestructible.

And finally, obey the 2ft rule whereby anything valuable is placed at least two feet above your precious poppet's head. This ought to prevent any more tears before bedtime (for both parent AND child).





WIPING THE SLATE CLEAN



YOUR GUIDE TO HOW OFTEN HOUSEHOLD CHORES OUGHT TO BE DONE

Once a day: It may seem like hard work to clean every day, but these are simple habits it's worth getting into in order to minimise germs that build up in crucial areas of your home.

- ▶ Wipe down kitchen and dining surfaces with antibacterial solution
- ▶ Sweep the kitchen floor
- ▶ Squeegee shower walls
- ▶ Sanitise kitchen and bathroom sinks

Once a week: These chores are ideal for a weekend spruce.

- ▶ Wash towels and bed sheets
- ▶ Clean out the fridge
- ▶ Vacuum carpets and furniture
- ▶ Dust down the furniture and clean the mirrors
- ▶ Scrub kitchen appliances, bathroom surfaces and the toilet
- ▶ Clean the microwave
- ▶ Sanitise sponges and cloths

Once a month: Make time to rid your house of all the invisible dirt and dust which has been building up.

- ▶ Deep clean the dishwasher and washing machine
- ▶ Dust blinds and light fittings

- ▶ Wipe down skirting boards
- ▶ Clean inside the vacuum

Every six months: Here we get down to the slightly grimy jobs which no one really wants to do, but will really help prolong the lifespan of the appliances and surfaces in your home.

- ▶ Deep clean inside the fridge
- ▶ Wash the shower curtain
- ▶ Vacuum behind the sofas
- ▶ Clean the oven and extractor hood
- ▶ Flip the mattress
- ▶ Clean out the freezer
- ▶ Wash duvets and pillows

Once a year: At this point your house ought to be looking and feeling pretty clean, meaning that there are only a few additional jobs you might want to consider.

- ▶ Deep clean carpets and upholstery
- ▶ Wash curtains
- ▶ Clear out the gutters
- ▶ Deep clean windows
- ▶ Clean fireplace and chimney
- ▶ Clear out dryer vents and washing machine filter





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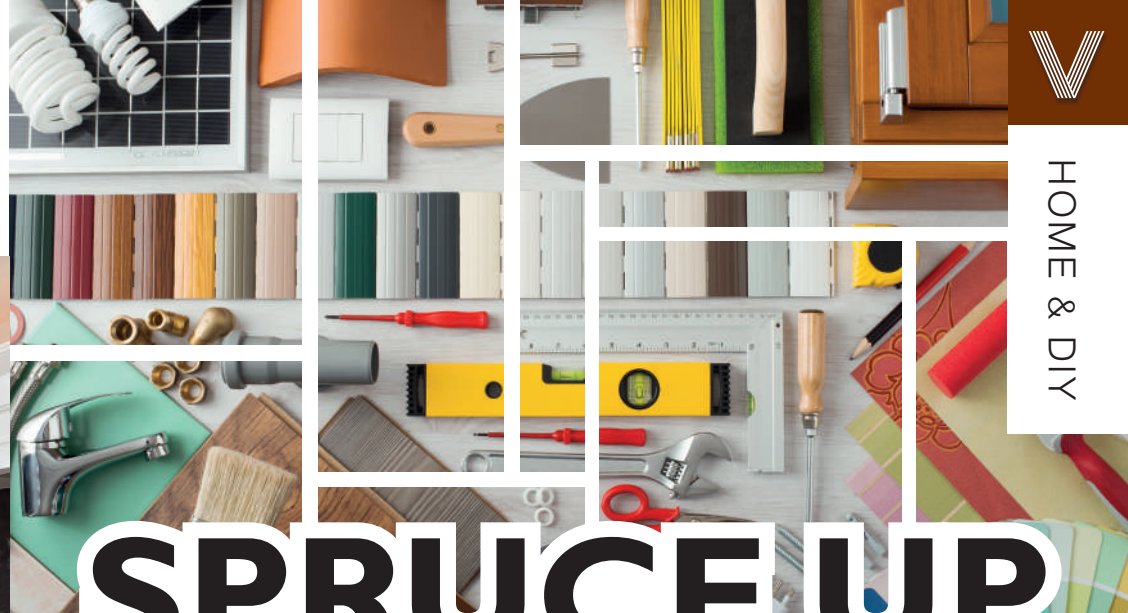
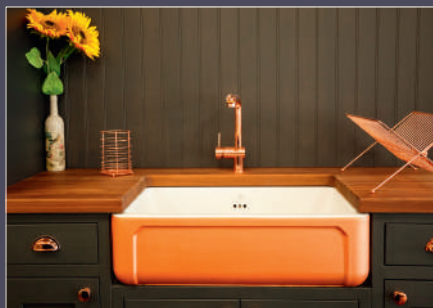
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HOME & DIY

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Selling up? These DIY ideas will add value to your home.

Fix the front door

As the first port of call, you need your front door to make a big impression. So give it a fresh coat of paint, change the doorknob and add a shiny new letterbox.

Change the windows

PVCu windows will certainly add worth, but only if your home isn't a high-value period property, in which case it is vital to maintain the original frames.

Install central heating

If you don't already have it, you'll spend £1,000-£3,000 but central heating will add £5,000 to your property.

Spruce up the kitchen

For many families, the kitchen is the heart of the home and therefore needs to look welcoming and modern. Replace shabby cabinets and counter tops and consider installing a dishwasher if there isn't one already.

Put mirrors in the hall

A simple trick for a cramped hall space is to place a mirror on either side for instant spaciousness.

Pave the front garden

If parking is tricky in your area, paving over a barely-used front garden could add up to £50,000 to your home. Now that's easy money.

Declutter

The overall feeling in a home is important, so don't cost yourself money by leaving toys and junk all over the place. Keep it clear, clean and simple.

Boost your bathroom

Small details are important in the bathroom, and as taps and shower curtains can look grubby quickly, it's worth replacing them.

Convert the garage

It's relatively inexpensive to turn a garage into a living space, but to know if it's really worth it, multiply square footage gained by local price per square foot.

Add a final flourish

Buying a home is a huge commitment, and the first impression can really sway a buyer's mind. So, buy fresh flowers, make sure your home smells nice and ensure it's relatively clean to make potential buyers feel instantly at ease.

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HOME & DIY



Crystal Vision

Can natural crystals placed strategically around your home really improve your zen?

Crystals are the hot new thing in feng shui. At least that's what's being said on the digital grapevine. They're certainly a simpler and probably cheaper method of boosting the positive energy in your home, as they require no renovations or rearranging of your furniture, and add natural beauty to any room.

However, there is nothing new about utilising the power of natural crystals, as they have been a valuable tool in healing, protection and energy restoration for centuries. And yet, there is no concrete scientific evidence to prove they actually work. Some say this is because the powerful vibrations they are said to omit are too tiny to be measured, and it is these which help us manifest and transform that energy into action.

So, for example, if you want to recover from a bad relationship, or nurture love and romance, you'll be needing the rose quartz. A master healer in matters

of the heart, place several tumbled rose quartz stones in a bowl on your nightstand, or two heart-shaped stones under you and your partner's pillow to help navigate a rocky patch in your relationship.

In contrast, the clear quartz is the last thing you want in your bedroom, as it can stimulate too much energy. Instead, these wonderfully diverse stones work well in a family room, as they clear out negative energy and amplify happiness.

A tourmaline by your front door will offer protection, and an amethyst will help bring calm and clarity to areas where you need to foster concentration and meditative thought, like an office, or for some, the downstairs loo.

The most important thing to bear in mind when using these natural beauties is that crystals help channel and amplify the energy you put out there, so if you've got no faith in crystals, they'll have no faith in you.

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Clear Quartz for
energy and happiness



Tourmaline for
protection



Amethyst for calm
and clarity



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



LOCAL NEWS



Photo credit: Georgia Box

Georgia Box launches first official single

Georgia Box is an Essex-born social media sensation who recently grabbed the world's attention with her version of Shaggy's *It Wasn't Me*, which blew up online with more than 30 million views.

The creative singer-songwriter has been uploading viral MC battles, covers and mashups every week since she was 19, earning her more Facebook followers than singers Raye and Anne-Marie combined, 90 million video views last year alone and receiving thousands of messages and comments from her fans who says she empowers them.

The 23-year-old is an accomplished football player who plays for Billericay Town Ladies and Essex County and Georgia is one of her past club's all-time highest scorers.

Last month she launched her first official single /

Don't Want You Anymore. The upbeat urban pop track was written about the break-up of a past relationship, where she was "just over it", and produced by one of the UK's hottest talents Tre Jean-Marie, the man responsible for the recent sounds of Craig David, Jason Derulo and Wretch 32.

Georgia promotes female empowerment throughout her music and lifestyle and encourages that we don't all need to conform to the stereotypes.

Georgia has been spending a lot of time in the studio recently, working on new tracks with a number of fantastic writers and producers. This is only just the beginning of the next step in her career. Keep your eyes peeled.

Georgia Box's *I Don't Want You Anymore* is available to stream now on iTunes and Spotify.



ON PATROL WITH... THE PASTORS



Street Pastors continue to patrol the night time economy in Brentwood and Billericay. We go out to help, listen and look out for anyone who is or becomes vulnerable.

Since our last report we have had exciting news. Financial support has been received to also branch out our projects onto the rail lines. We have now had our first patrol on the Greater Anglia route as Rail Pastors and our intention on the railway is to help the Samaritans in any intervention work we can do around preventing suicide. This is an issue that really affects too many people. Those affected include the close family of the victim and also friends and the travelling community. We hope that through our presence we can instigated conversations to help people value themselves more.



what we do. This included the Annual Awards Day with the Police and Fire Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst. Although we didn't win an award it was great to be able to have a stand as we continued to reach out to our communities explaining what we do.

If you require any more information you could follow us on Facebook or Twitter or email Phil Norton at Billericay@Streetpastors.org.uk

Committee agrees to look further into rebuilding swimming pool

A new leisure facility could be built in Billericay following a decision by Basildon Council's regeneration and environment committee to further investigate two options.

At a meeting of the committee on Wednesday, March 21, it agreed to commission further detailed work on two options to build a new £9million facility with a gym at Billericay Swimming Pool.

A further option to rebuild the facility without a gym at a cost of between £700,000 and £3.2million will also be explored.

The committee also agreed to undertake a public consultation following the detailed work on the two options.

The swim and gym option would see the creation of a larger 25-metre pool with six lanes and a new 13-metre by eight-metre learner pool. The plan

includes a first-storey 120-station gym, two activity studios and a café.

An additional 70 parking spaces would also be included in the plan which would see the new facility built alongside the old Billericay Swimming Pool minimising disruption to current visitors.

Councillor Alan Ball, Basildon Council's chairman of the regeneration and environment committee, said: "The leisure research already carried out shows there is a demand for this type of facility in Billericay. The current facility is at the end of its natural life so it seems a good time to look at building a more efficient modern facility for the benefit of Billericay residents.

"We will now do further detailed work on the costs, time and resource implications before taking another look at this option at a future committee meeting."

BILLERICAY TOWN FC



Cup glory for the Blues

There were wild celebrations at Colchester United's Weston Homes Community Stadium last month as Billericay FC saw off holders Chelmsford City to lift the Essex Senior Cup in front of a crowd of more than 2,500 people.

After a slow start to proceedings, the game began to gather pace and it was the Blues who grabbed the initiative. After Chelmsford appealed in vain for offside, Robbie Evans sprinted into action and calmly slotted past Sam Beasant to put Glenn Tamplin's men in front.

City responded well to going behind and came close to levelling almost immediately. The Clarets' pressure eventually told 10 minutes before the interval when Danny Green equalised from close range. At the other end the Chelmsford keeper had to be alert, acrobatically tipping the ball over the crossbar to keep the scores level.

It was on the hour mark when Billericay dealt City a severe blow from which they were not able to recover. Confusion in the Clarets penalty area saw Calum

Butcher restore the Blues' lead with his first goal for the club.

There wasn't much defending for Billericay as

they sought to preserve their slender advantage, and after a couple of scares, the Blues lifted the Senior Cup for a third time in their seventh appearance in the final.

After the game, Billericay manager and owner Glenn Tamplin said he was delighted with the result.

He tweeted: "BTFC fans and players have made me so proud so so proud. What a night. Fans singing and behind us for 90 minutes. Players showing true heart. Determination and desire. 1st Trophy in the cabinet."

Fans also took to Twitter to congratulate the team.

Nathan Tansley tweeted: "Served one of the @BTFC at subway yesterday before the game such a pleasure to chat with he didn't just rush off had good chat could see his excitement ahead of game and praised @glenntamplin high, Can really see the togetherness at that club congratulations on cup win."

Steve Lewis, sport sub-editor of *The Sun* and self-confessed Billericay fan, tweeted: "Brilliant Essex Senior Cup final win for @BTFC - excellent in the second half, subs made a real difference, great battling. Well done all @glenntamplin @HarryWheeler1 @RobSwaine1."



#TogetherWeSailAsOne

Motorist rescued from vehicle in water



Photo credit: Google Maps

Firefighters rescued a motorist from their vehicle after they drove into around two feet of water recently.

The incident occurred on February 15 at around 4pm at Buttsbury Wash, near Billericay.

Fire crews freed the driver by 4.36pm. No one else was in the vehicle at the time.

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service released the following advice: "When confronted with any amount of water more than half the height of your car wheels, you should always stop and find an alternative route.

"Just a couple of feet of water is enough to float a car – meaning stalling, a loss of control and mechanical damage to the vehicle.

"Driving in water just isn't worth it – not only are you risking your own life, you'll also require the help of fire crews and rescue teams who could be needed elsewhere."

News from the Basildon Community Policing Team

The Basildon Community Policing Team, CPT, is focussed on what is important to local residents, including the residents of Billericay. The team is aware of a small number of youths that have been responsible for some local crimes, as well as behaving in an anti-social manner. In response to this there has been an increase in the number of patrols in Billericay. During one of these patrols a young person was apprehended for shoplifting and has since been reported for three offences.

The CPT is also using civil powers, such as Community Protection Notices, to manage individuals that are involved in crime and anti-social behaviour.

Inspector Steve Parry would encourage any residents that have concerns to contact his team so that an appropriate response can be put in place. Email BasildonCPT@essex.pnn.police.uk

There has been some good results when we have responded to calls from the public. Three people have been charged and remanded following the attack on Colebys Jewellers and drugs were found at an address in Lorrimore Close after acting on information from Crimestoppers.

Advice given to pet owners after cat's body found

It is feared the M25 cat killer is still around after a body was found in Billericay recently.

The body was found on Saturday, March 3 and the incident is believed to have occurred the night before.

SNARL (South Norwood Animal Rescue Liberty) co-founder Boudicca Rising said: "We're still looking at a number of leads and information around the killing.

"We've got lots of information that we are processing."

Boudicca has given advice for pet owners who are worried for the safety of their animals.

She said: "Keep your cats in at night. There have been a few incidents during the day, but most have been during the night.

"Rabbits, guinea pigs, everything, keep them in at night.

"If people find bodies or parts they should call us. If they think they know who it is, call the police on 101 or talk to us.

"Anybody you see abusing cats is a 999 call, so call us."



stock image



Sir Elton John CBE

Goodbye yellow brick road

Sir Elton John CBE is facing an important crossroads in his life. After 50 years at the top of the charts, wowing fans around the world with his legendary catalogue and such generational classics as *Sacrifice*, *Daniel*, *I'm Still Standing* and *Candle in the Wind*, the icon is hanging up his sparkly shades after one final tour... albeit a very long one spanning three years that will kick off this September.

But this is far from a sad departure for the singer. In fact, the father of two – to Zachary, seven, and Elijah, five, with husband David

Furnish – couldn't be happier, revealing "nothing is more important than my boys", and therein lies the reason for calling it quits.

Elton (real name Reginald Dwight) is very clear - this is not retirement. Far from it, it appears as the star will simply be switching gears, remaining as busy as ever in the studio.

Speaking with characteristic honesty, the 71-year-old talks health scares and plans for the future, as well as delving deeper into the decision to keep the tour truck firmly off the yellow brick road.

The INTERVIEW

You've got your biggest and, sadly, last tour coming up - firstly what made you decide to give up touring?

ELTON: I've been mulling it over, giving it a lot of thought for a sizeable chunk of time. It's not an easy decision but it's the right decision. It's time. But I'm possibly the most excited I've ever been for a tour because I'm planning on visiting every country in the world that's welcomed me and given me tremendous support. This is my 'thank you' to each and every fan. So, it's not a sad goodbye, it's a triumphant thank you.

So this isn't retirement?

ELTON: I'll never retire; it sounds so boring to me. I'm simply stopping all the travel. My boys are at an age now where it's no longer practical with their schooling and schedules, and if we didn't have children, I would continue travelling.

But I'm still going to record albums, I'm still going to write music. I'm still going to produce movies, I'm still going to write musicals. It's going to free up time for me to focus on other projects.

And I have a family now - my husband, my boys. It's not about me, I can't be self-focused and I have to pull back. They come first before anything and anyone else.

Are you sad to say goodbye to the road?

ELTON: No, honestly no. Yes, I would still continue to tour because I enjoy it, but I've been doing it since I was 16. This is now a different, new chapter in my life and it's difficult for the two to marry - I'm happy to put that last chapter to bed and focus on what's to come with these vibrant, wonderful little people. I just want to be with them.

You did previously say you wanted to die on stage?

ELTON: Things change. Life happens and I'm so lucky it did.

It'll be beneficial for your health surely slowing things down, a little?

ELTON: Every year, I would do a couple hundred flights and as time has gone on and I've gotten older, it's starting to take it out of me. I'm happy for that to come to an end.

And yes, I had a health scare last year. It was quite serious and I'm not going to sugar coat it. I'm fine now and have a full clean bill of health, but it played into the decision. My body isn't invincible, I have to respect it and treat it kinder, and chopping out all those air miles can't hurt.

Are you more aware of your mortality after it?

ELTON: Yes, definitely. It was a wakeup call, it changed my perspective, and I'm glad it did.

But you'd already decided to quit before that happened?

ELTON: I had but this only reinforced it. I'd decided three years ago really, so this isn't a shock announcement - we thought long and hard about it.

What can fans expect?

ELTON: It's going to be very elaborate, very memorable, and the perfect send-off for the music that changed my life. It's going to be a huge celebration, exploding with colour and vibrancy. I want to go out to the biggest bang no one will forget.

And the boys will be there, even though this is the reason you want to stop?

ELTON: They will be with us for some of the way, most likely Australia and Asia, because I want them to experience those cultures. We will be taking them out of school and having a tutor with us, but those travel experiences in themselves are invaluable educational.

Are they fans of your music?

ELTON: They do like Daddy's music - certain tracks more than others.

What's their favourite?

ELTON: They love *I'm Still Standing*. They love coming to the shows and get very excited, but then once we get home it's all forgotten about. I'm no one special in my own home.

If I was a footballer, I would be God to them. What I do doesn't rank quite so highly.

As you look back on your career and your life, what lessons do you want to teach your boys?

ELTON: They already have a very different life to the one I was brought up with.

I think their upbringing is going to come with its own set of built-in difficulties. They come from a well-off background which will afford its own advantages, but mine was very working-class where I had to battle for everything I got, and I want to instill those same values in them. But it's harder growing up in this world and David and I are very mindful of that.

They're fantastic young boys, they have good hearts and compassionate, kind personalities. We just want to be there for them - to guide them as best we can. It's all you can do really as a parent.

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Best in BLOOM

If you're thinking about adding some much-needed colour to your garden but want to plant something a little different this year, then ditch the daffs and try these fresh floral ideas for spring.

Like the ebullient animal which shares the same name, *Fawn Lilies* are a joyous signaller of spring. Also known as white beauties, these creamy white flowers have a slightly 'out of this world' quality, as their star-shaped petals defy gravity to reveal delicate yellow tendrils.

All poppies add glorious colour, but there is something about the giant crepe paper petals of the *Oriental Poppy* which makes it a stunning addition to any garden in bloom. Whether you desire the bright pink regality of the Raspberry Queen (which can grow to up to 3ft), the salmon-pink of the Mrs Perry, or the rich jamminess of Patty's Plum, there is a poppy for you.

Originally from mountainous regions of Asia, *Foxtail Lilies* add a dramatic flourish to the landscape. Bursting out of the ground in an orange spike composed of tiny blooms, this is one plant which appears exactly as its name would suggest.

According to legend, the *Pasque Flower* springs from the blood of viking warriors and grows upon their graves. Sadly, these wondrous wildflowers may go the same way as those warring invaders, as the lack of suitable land (Britain has lost 97 per cent of its wildflower meadows since the 1930s) makes it ever harder for them to grow. So, add the magnificence of purple and gold to your garden by investing in this rare wildflower.

The pretty *Polyanthus* may be a commoner compared to its rarer counterparts, but this hardy and bold blossom is a superb way to cheaply and efficiently fill your beds with life. Some gardeners find their hues bright to the point of garish, but if you can't create a natural carpet of cherry, crimson and stonewash blue, what's the point of nurturing a garden at all?



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FASHION

THE MAC PACK

Dodge the April showers in style with these fashion-forward and practical raincoats.

X-RAY FASHION

Make like a raindrop and get yourself a transparent anorak. It's hard to believe this style is back in fashion, but when worn right, this is a seriously cool street-style statement. Think thin, tinted, almost shower curtain fabric, in muted shades and a loose-fit mid-length... more 1990s raver than five-year-old puddle jumper.

THE PUKKA PARKA

If you want a simple and light cover-up, you can't go wrong with a hooded parka. Easy to roll up and pack into a bag, this is the perfect jacket for festivalgoers, and with branded sportswear back in fashion, you can wear your three stripes with pride.

TEXTURISE

Textured raincoats are a popular look this spring and are a more stylish way of rocking the transparent trend. Clear PVC is layered with another fabric underneath to create a structured and feminine silhouette, while still offering full waterproof practicality.

THE DADDY MAC

Nothing beats the classic double-breasted trench coat which a certain British brand made world-famous. These days you don't need to spend a month's rent on recreating this timeless and unfathomably stylish look as most high street stores offer a copycat design, but you will need to master that confident and purposeful stride to attain full raincoat kudos.

SHORT AND SWEET

If you loathe a bulky and shapeless anorak, fear not, for you can still stay dry and look good. As long as you're not caught in a rainstorm, a short wax jacket will keep the worst of the rain off, whilst still making a fashion statement.

HEAD PONCHO

Not just for fishermen, ponchos can actually look quite feminine. With their voluminous draped shape, they make a flattering cover up, and with many brands offering ponchos sporting cute and quirky patterns, they are a great option to keep tucked in your bag, in case of a sudden lunchtime rainstorm.



Photo credit: www.hitherandthither.net

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Vegan VIXEN



THE RISE OF ANIMAL-FREE MAKE-UP AND WHERE TO FIND IT

There are over half-a-million vegans in the UK and any one of them will tell you that veganism is not just a diet, it's a lifestyle. But while it's easy to eschew meat and dairy in your meals and choose synthetic clothing fabric, finding beauty and make-up options that contain zero animal products can be a lot more complicated.

One reason it's difficult to know what you're buying is because language used on ingredients lists can be vague and misleading, so it's important to know the lingo. For starters, 'cruelty-free' usually means the cosmetics haven't been tested on animals – and is entirely different from animal-free (contains no animal products whatsoever).

Other words to look out for:

- **CARMINE** (AKA cochineal, crimson lake, natural red 4) – a colour created from crushing insects (think your favourite red lipstick)
- **BEESWAX** – found in lip balms and mascara
- **LANOLIN** – a grease extracted from animal wool
- **GUANINE** – fish scales that are used to create shimmer and shine

Another difficulty can be finding products that are effective and affordable, but with veganism being the fastest-growing lifestyle movement in the country (there are three-and-a-half times more vegans than there were in 2006) it appears that beauty brands are finally

listening. Barry M, for example, is one of the best-value make-up lines on the high street and plenty of its products (not all) are vegan, while Superdrug's B line is entirely vegan.

Some high-end brands have upped their game too and companies like Kat Von D, Illamasqua and Charlotte Tilbury all have products that are both cruelty-free and vegan – meaning you can look like a fox without wearing anything that's ever harmed one.



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Meat-Free Mondays

If you're looking to eat less meat but don't know where to start, consider just having one day a week without it. And as these five delicious veggie meal ideas will prove, substituting meat doesn't necessarily mean missing out on flavour.

ROASTED VEGETABLE LASAGNE



This sumptuous lasagne doesn't even require a meat substitute, as red peppers and aubergines are roasted before being layered with tomato, béchamel sauce and pasta sheets, then topped with cherry tomatoes and mozzarella. Once baked in the oven, you wouldn't know the difference.

PUMPKIN GREEN CURRY WITH NOODLES



Make a green curry as you usually would, but swap the prawns or chicken for chunks of fresh pumpkin. Meanwhile, boil some noodles and sauté it with coconut oil and seasoning.

THREE-BEAN MEXICAN CHILLI



Both warming and filling, the combination of cannellini, pinto and red kidney beans with canned tomatoes, peppers, onion and spices make this a seriously hearty dish.

BAKED SQUASH



A fabulous dish for a dinner party, simply cut and deseed your squash, then score and brush the flesh with garlic, chilli and olive oil. Next, roast along with courgette, pepper, tomato and onion (in a separate dish). Then mix the roasted veg with breadcrumbs, parmesan, pine nuts and goats cheese, before spooning into your squash halves. Bake until golden and bubbling.

BLACK BEAN BURGERS



Packed with protein, these beauties are as good as the real thing. Tinned black beans, breadcrumbs, spring onions and chilli are mixed together before being moulded into burger-shaped patties. Chill your burgers in the fridge for 10 minutes to maintain shape, before frying. Serve in a bun with onions, tomatoes and whatever relish you fancy, and serve with a cold beer. Heaven.



FOOD & DRINK



WHAT DOES THE WAY YOU LIKE YOUR STEAK SAY ABOUT YOU?

Steak tartare

This suggests an individual with refined taste, a flair for the exotic and an air of mystery. Chopped-up raw beef steak served with onions, capers, Worcestershire sauce and often a raw egg, this is authentic French cuisine and not for the squeamish. If preparing tartare at home, be sure to buy the freshest meat you can, and always hand-chop – don't mince.

Rare

You are bold, outgoing and like to grab life by the horns; literally, in this case. When it comes to business, you have a nose for a deal and will stop at nothing to get what you want. You buy your suits from a tailor, avoid carbs and work out with a trainer. Order fillet for the most tender, melt-in-the-mouth meat, and balance your carnivorous tendencies with a fresh salad on the side.

Medium-rare

You're a reliable sort; you know what you like

and say what you mean. Of course, you enjoy the odd thrill in life, but never throw caution entirely to the wind; you're far too busy for that. You have a lively social life and a broad spectrum of acquaintances. So whether dining at The Wolseley or The Wolf and Hound, you need a meal you can always count on – a medium-rare sirloin and chips with peppercorn sauce is just that.

Well-done

Not one to take risks, you like to know exactly what you're getting yourself into. Before dining out, you check the menu online, and most importantly the reviews. You value loyalty and prefer to have a few good friends over many acquaintances, with whom you love nothing more than to have a good chat and one, maybe two glasses of red wine. But while your dinner may be reliably decent, you run the risk of getting bored, so why not liven things up with a tasty side dish (spicy onion rings) or a decadent pud?



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Afternoon Tea

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We have invited the whole community to visit both of our homes, **Howard Lodge** and **Dudbrook Hall**, to meet our residents, staff and families to get a greater understanding of what we do.
The theme is 'Linking communities' and we're also celebrating the Queen's Birthday. All relatives and friends of our residents are welcome to join the celebrations.

Transport to and from venues can be arranged subject to availability.



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CHAINED *to the rhythm*

Why obeying your circadian rhythm can drastically improve your overall health

If you're feeling constantly fatigued and under the weather, it may be time to start listening to your circadian rhythm. It's not some new style of dance music, or trendy workout style, but your internal body clock, otherwise known as your sleep/wake cycle.

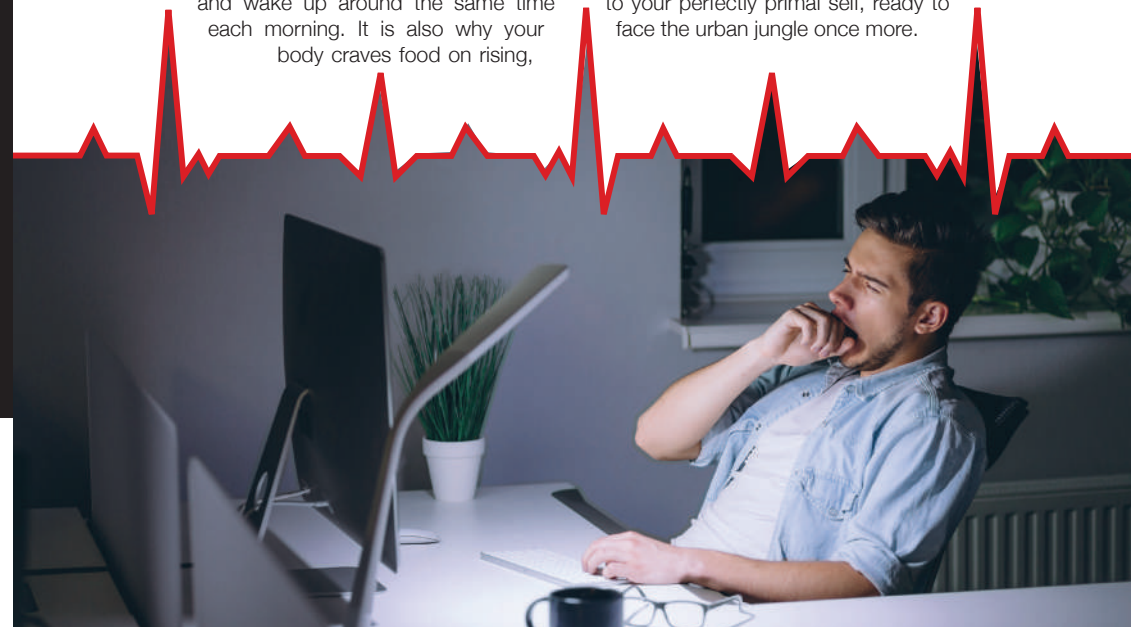
The problem is us humans are so used to dictating and controlling every area of our busy lives, we sometimes refuse to acknowledge that some things really are out of our grasp. A bit like that inability to resist delicious food which combines fat with sugar, or when mild stress triggers the full fight or flight response, our circadian rhythm is a primal and fundamental part of who we are, and ignoring it can lead to serious health problems.

It tells our bodies when to sleep, rise and eat. It is the reason you feel tired at the same time each night and wake up around the same time each morning. It is also why your body craves food on rising,

and also why you have that energy slump most afternoons after lunch. When we obey this clock we feel rested, content and tend not to overeat, but when we have too many late nights or disrupt the clock with artificial light (from mobile phones) it can spark a myriad of health issues from insomnia, diabetes, depression and even cardiovascular events.

So how do you reset a disrupted clock? Firstly, set yourself a bed and a wakeup time, don't sleep in, and don't nap during the day. Make sure your bedroom is dark in the evening and try to avoid phones and TVs before sleep. In winter months invest in a SAD alarm clock which emulates sunrise, plus limit your caffeine and alcohol intake as this can interrupt sleep patterns.

Within a few weeks you ought to be feeling back to your perfectly primal self, ready to face the urban jungle once more.



HEALTH & FITNESS



PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

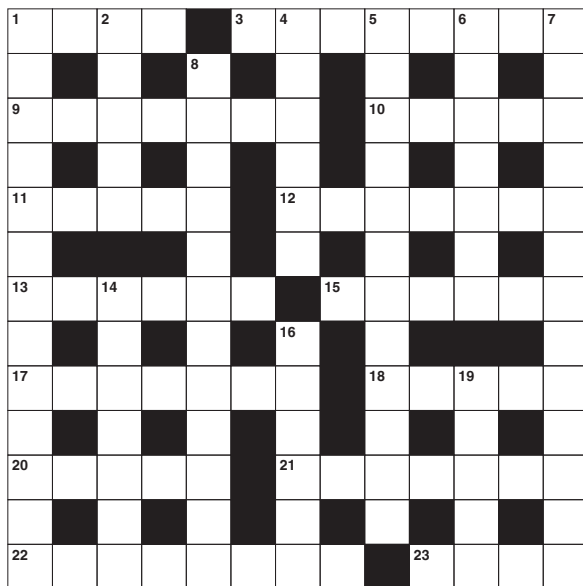
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

ACROSS

1. Hang loosely (4)
3. Arguments (8)
9. Pertaining to marriage (7)
10. Condescend (5)
11. Church council (5)
12. Japanese dish of raw fish (7)
13. Regalia (6)
15. Fish with thick lips (6)
17. Funnel-shaped river mouth (7)
18. Suit (5)
20. Small arm of the sea (5)
21. Letter-for-letter; verbatim (7)
22. Dullness of colour (8)
23. Anxious; nervous (4)

DOWN

1. Having patience in spite of problems (4-9)
2. Attractive flower (5)
4. Except when (6)
5. Reallocate (12)
6. Draws forth (7)
7. Mawkishly (13)
8. School for young children (12)
16. Rides a bike (6)



14. ___ Portman: actress (7)
19. Unit of capacitance (5)

DID YOU KNOW

- ▶ A hard-boiled egg can spin – uncooked or soft boiled ones don't.
- ▶ Unless food is mixed with saliva you can't taste it.
- ▶ Honey is the only natural food that doesn't spoil.
- ▶ Flamingos can only eat when their heads are upside down.
- ▶ It takes between seven and 21 days to make a single jelly bean.
- ▶ It takes around 12 hours for your food to entirely digest.
- ▶ Cabbage is made up of 91 per cent water and cucumbers are 96 per cent
- ▶ Eggs contain all the vitamins except vitamin C and most of the vitamin C in fruits is found in its skin.
- ▶ Fresh apples float because they contain 25 per cent air.

SUDOKU

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WHAT'S ON

in your area



WHAT'S ON

The Billericay Ladies Probus Club

The Mount Avenue Banqueting House,
Hutton, CM13 2NS

April 9

We meet on the second Monday of the month for lunch at The Mount Avenue Banqueting Suite, Hutton.

We have speakers, quizzes, day trips, holidays, coffee morning and garden parties (weather allowing).

For details, please call Jenny on 01277 633115.

Charity Lunch

Billericay Methodist Church, Western Road,
Billericay, CM12 9DT

April 14, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

A tasty two-course snack lunch and drink for only £4.50. This month the proceeds are going towards the funding of young people to attend World Scout Jamboree 2019. There is no need to book. All welcome. Contact for 01277 622297 for more details.

Gone Too Soon Bereavement Support

Reids, 66-68 Laindon Road, Billericay,
CM12 9LD

April 16, 7pm – 9pm

Gone Too Soon Bereavement Support for parents who have lost a son or daughter. Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month.

For further information please call Linda for a chat on 07387 805406 or email lyn-currie@hotmail.co.uk

Billericay Educational Consortium SCITT taster event

St Peter's Catholic Primary School, Coxes
Farm Road, Billericay, CM11 2UB

April 20, 9.15am – noon



We are delighted to run this event with St Peter's Catholic Primary School to give you the chance to find out more about training to become a primary school teacher. This is a unique opportunity to

experience a working school environment and discover whether teaching may be a career for you.

For more information, visit www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/billericay-educational-consortium-scitt-taster-event-tickets-40093725412

A Mummers Play: St George and the Dragon

Corner of Billericay High Street and
St Edith's Lane

April 21, 11am and 11.45am



Photo credit: Mayflower Morris Men

Mayflower Morris Men will perform their Mummers' Play twice at 11am and 11.45am on Saturday, April 21 on the corner of Billericay High Street and St Edith's Lane. TOTALLY FREE. For all ages. Remember to boo the dragon. See www.mayflowermorris.com or phone Julian Whybra on 01277 654228 for further details.

Billericay and Shenfield Probus Club

The Banqueting Suite, Mount Avenue, Hutton,
CM13 2NS

April 26

Great news. We have joined forces with Shenfield Probus Club to form our new Billericay and Shenfield Probus Club.

Our new club is going from strength to strength. We are a group of gentlemen who get together for lunch on the last Thursday of each month.

Come and enjoy a three-course lunch, usually followed by a speaker. We arrange a coach day and holiday trips for our members.

If you are interested and would like to arrange a visit, call John, club secretary, on 01277 653816 or email maryjohnwatson@gmail.com

A Yank

FINALLY MAKES IT TO A BRITISH ROYAL COURT

Meghan Markle is the third American to attempt to join the Royal Family.

But she looks certain to succeed where the two others failed.

It is not that long ago that such a union between the fifth in line to the throne and a commoner, an actress and divorcee with African American heritage would have been unthinkable.

However in the last few decades, immigration has softened racist attitudes about the unsuitability of people from the fringes of the empire for marrying blue bloods.

Also in 2002 the Anglican Church ended restrictions on divorcees remarrying in the church.

But Americans Wallis Simpson and Koo Stark did not have the more enlightened days to help them in their quest to find love in the Royal Family.

Wallis, like Meghan, was a divorcee, and her marriage in 1937 to Edward VIII caused him to abdicate and brought the Royal Family to one of the biggest crises in its history.

It also paved the way for the reign of our present Queen through her father Albert – George VI-, Edward's brother.

Koo, like Meghan, was an actress and for two years she dated Harry's uncle Prince Andrew in the early '80s. Their friendship floundered after the revelation of a naked shower scene in a 1976 art house film *emily*.

This, coupled with pressure on Andrew and Koo by press, paparazzi and the Palace, contributed to the split.

In 1988 Koo said: "The amount of attention and pressure on me became unbearable. It was a nightmare."

Their romance ended in 1983. Stark went on to marry Tim Jeffries in 1984, and Andrew married Sarah Ferguson in 1986. Neither marriage lasted.

In contrast Meghan has been warmly welcomed into the Royal Family.

Social media has been super excited that #blackgirlmagic is coming to the Royal Family.

But the biracial American actress is actually pretty magical in other ways, too.

The 36-year-old seems to be more than fulfilling what fans want from a novice royal in a fairytale royal romance. It also helps that she is smart, beautiful and passionate about humanitarian efforts around the world.

Photo credit: www.vogue.co.uk

Queen George Duke
Princess HRE

THE ROYAL NAME Swapping game

It is a complicated business when it comes to names – especially if you are royal.

And it is something that new bride to be Meghan Markle will have to understand.

Like Prince William's wife Catherine, Meghan, 36, will not be a real princess, as women who are not of royal birth can hold that title.

Her official title will be Princess Henry of Wales, just as Catherine is Princess William of Wales.

Catherine was listed as "princess of the United Kingdom" in the occupation box of Prince's George's birth certificate because of her official title.

The Queen is expected to make Harry and Meghan the Duke and Duchess of Sussex as a wedding present, so she will then become Meghan, Duchess of Sussex, as well.

On the point of princesses, Princess Diana was also not a princess although she was commonly known as one.

On her marriage she became simply The Princess of Wales, as there can only ever be one Prince of Wales. On her divorce when she lost her HRH status she was just Diana, Princess of Wales. The very important word THE, with a capital T had also been removed.

Though most monarchs of the United Kingdom have used their first baptismal name as their reign name, on three occasions monarchs have chosen a different name.

First, Queen Victoria had been christened Alexandrina Victoria, but took the throne under the name Victoria.

When Victoria's son, Prince Albert Edward, became king in 1901, he took the reign name Edward VII, as Victoria had made it known that she never wanted any king to rule as Albert so as not to eclipse her Albert. Edward therefore chose to use one of his other names.

In 1936, after the abdication crisis, Prince Albert, Duke of York, assumed the throne as King George VI rather than "King Albert" for the same reason.

Prince Charles may elect not to be known as "Charles III" out of concern about comparisons with Charles II of England (who was known as a playboy), Charles I of England (who was executed after the English Civil War) and the Jacobite memory of the "Young Pretender" Charles Edward Stuart (who claimed the title "Charles III").

He may instead choose George VII in honour of his grandfather.

Prince Victoria Edward
Duchess



NATIONAL TREASURE

It's the racing event of the year, flush with fleet-footed fillies and promises of wealth untold, and now you can get to the track in top shape with this guide to the runners and riders in the 2018 Grand National.

The Grand National is, by a length, the racing event of the UK calendar, and this year is no different. On April 14, the crowds will head to Aintree Racecourse in Liverpool to see some of the biggest names in horseracing competing for the coveted prize, with a cheeky little flutter or three included.

This year's early standout contender is TOTAL RECALL at 12/1. Despite having a rocky start in competitive racing that saw this stallion as likely to unseat his jockey as to win by a country mile, a recent change in owner has seemed to have done wonders for the horse, who has now won three races on the trot (and at a gallop).

At 16/1 punters backing THE LAST SAMURI will be hoping for a bit of numerical luck this year. Having come second in 2016 before a disappointing 16th place finish last year, it may be a case of three times the charm - especially given the fantastic form already shown this season by this aspiring champ.

CAUSE OF CAUSES at 20/1 may not seem like a potential champ, but the knowledge that this spirited contender was just pipped to the win in 2017 by then 25/1 outsider One for Arthur, and is known for being a solid chaser in most conditions, should tell you everything you need to know.

Meanwhile, owner Paul Nicholls has previous in training Grand National winners, after overseeing the development of Neptune Collonges in 2012. This year he's hoping that VICENTE will come up with the goods at Aintree, and secure the first ever consecutive Grand National one-two for Scottish owners.

Grand National Betting 2018 | Best Odds*

Horse	Race Age	Trainer	Best Odds
Total Recall	9	W P Mullins	14/1
Blaklion	9	Nigel Twiston-Davies	14/1
The Last Samuri	9	Kim Bailey	16/1
Anibale Fly	8	AJ Martin	20/1
Cause of Causes	9	Gordon Elliott	20/1
Tiger Roll	8	Gordon Elliott	25/1
Minella Rocco	8	Jonjo O'Neill	25/1
Bellshill	8	W Mullins	25/1
Seeyouatmidnight	10	A M Thomson	33/1
Vicente	9	Paul Nicholls	33/1
Gold Present	8	Nicky Henderson	25/1

ONE FOR ARTHUR (left, No22, Derek Fox) in rear at the 3rd fence on his way to winning The Randox Health Grand National Aintree, 8 Apr 2017
Photo credit: Steven Cargill/racingfotos.com/REX/Shutterstock

*All odds updated 19/3/18. All subject to change.
www.grandnational.org.uk/2018-grand-national-tips-ante-post-odds.php

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MOTORING



PARKING MAD

HOW TO CHALLENGE PARKING TICKETS... AND WIN.

We've all been there. You've popped out for a loaf of bread and returned to your vehicle a few minutes later only to find a parking ticket slapped on the windscreen. That's a £50 sourdough you're not going to get back.

Or are you?

These days, council parking is regulated to the hilt, and wardens must abide by strict criteria if they are to make your parking ticket stick... literally. So before you begrudgingly pull out that debit card, take a look at this quick guide to see if you've got grounds to challenge the fine:

1 THE FIVE-MINUTE WINDOW

Unless you're on double yellows, attendants must observe your vehicle (standing next to it) for five minutes, and in some situations as many as 10, before issuing a ticket. Check they have done this by referring to the times on the ticket. If they haven't, it's invalid.

2 'FAIR OPPORTUNITY'

The council must have given you a fair opportunity

to buy a ticket - that means a working machine in easy reach or alternative payment service, such as the 'Pay by Phone' facility. No way to pay? No ticket.

3 LINEAGE AND SIGNAGE

Road markings must be solid with no breaks in the paint, and signs must be clearly displayed, clean and within readable distance of the vehicle. Even in these days of administrative red tape, most tickets are cancelled because councils constantly fail to adhere to their own regulations.

4 CONTRAVENTION CODES

Parking wardens must list a specific contravention code in relation to the parking infringement and this can be found on the ticket. Wrong code? You're off the hook.

In the UK last year around a quarter of tickets were disputed, and 40 per cent of those challenged were overturned. And while private car parking rules and regulations differ, visiting Citizens' Advice online is an excellent first stop for further information and guidance.

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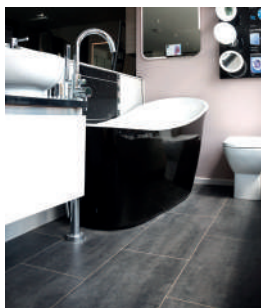
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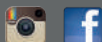


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