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DOTTY
IN YOUR
INTERIORS

DIVE DEEP

See the Titanic with
your own eyes

ASHLEY BANJO

Behind the success of Diversity

ED SHEERAN

The global superstar making history

VISION BillericayShenfield | Edition 24



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April 2019

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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** Billericay Shenfield.

Last month my wife and I went downstairs in the morning to find our back door wide open and our car keys gone.

Both our cars had been stolen from off our driveway.

To say it left us shaken up is an understatement.

The loss of the cars was one thing but knowing that people had broken into our house while we slept upstairs with our baby son was really disturbing.

It could have been very different. What if we disturbed them during the break-in? What if they went further into the house looking for things to steal? It scares me to think about it.

Thankfully the cars both have tracking systems and we found them quickly.

We had a lucky escape, but it did make me realise how complacent we'd been about our home security.

We've now ramped up our home defences in a way Fort Knox would be proud of.

Thankfully we found a good local alarm company and locksmith who came to our aid.

I'm sharing our experience to warn readers to be more aware about the measures they have in place to protect their homes and families.

Let's stay safe out there folks.

Thanks for reading and remember that if you have any news you want to share, I'm keen to hear it.

Nik

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THE DIVE

OF YOUR LIFE

Save up now for a truly titanic trip into the deep...

For over a hundred years, the sinking of the Titanic has fascinated, terrified and, dare we say it, even entertained the world.

A ship made famous by its demise, as it carried 1,517 poor souls to their watery deaths, has become a tearjerker, a milestone for flawed engineering and even a beacon for hope. And that's because, this April, as 'The Unsinkable' boat prepares to mark the 107th anniversary of its plummet to the floor of the ocean, everyday folk are being invited to dive down to the forlorn wreck and sample for themselves the rusted, barnacled vessel.

There are, of course, a few conditions. Firstly, only registered scientists can apply to make the trip to

the depths of the Atlantic Ocean, so best get out those study books. Secondly, you'll need to pay OceanGate or Bluefish, two companies who have developed a state-of-the-art submersible capable of the 90-minute descent, up to \$100,000 for the trip. And thirdly, you'll need the courage and confidence to believe you're not adding to the great ship's list of RIPs in what is surely an uncomfortable adventure into the deep.

The two craft that takes people down to the wreckage descend the full 13,000ft, with OceanGate's submersible (handily named Titan) having been extensively tested off the coast of the Bahamas. The company's CEO and founder Stockton Rush believes the venture marks a pivotal moment in our exploration of the seas.

He said: "This is a really important thing to come to fruition and it shows what we are capable of now. I can't express what achieving this means to me, and what it means to imagine the great things we're going to explore and find in the oceans in years to come."

And while the development of this level of diving technology creates incredible opportunities for ocean tourism, it can also help sub aqua conservation projects, helping us to look after and protect our oceans and all that live in them.

That we now have the opportunity to see the Titanic with our own eyes is also thanks to a man named Robert Ballard. When the oceanographer found the wreckage on a US Navy mission in 1985, it was the first time anyone had caught glimpse of the great ship since 2.20am on April 15, 1912, and

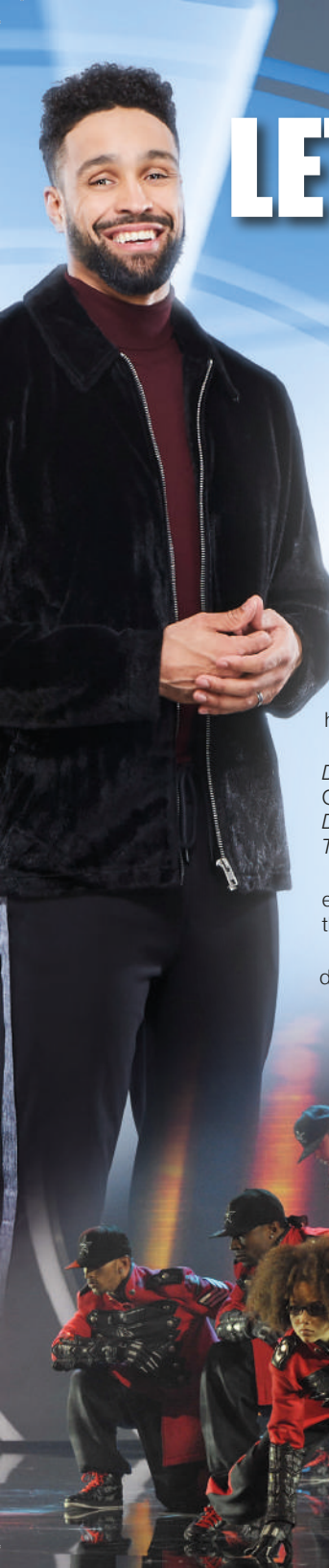
its discovery allowed a new generation to fall for her all over again.

The reality though, is venturing deep into the abyss in a submersible is the only way we will ever view the Titanic first-hand. Raising the wreckage has long been fantasised, but the crumbling mass would never make it back up to the surface. What's more, bacteria on the sea bed eat around 400lb of the ship every day – in fact there are so many bacteria down there that the rusted mass is surrounded by more life now than at any other point in her history.

The speed at which she is being eaten, however, means that within 50 years the wreck will be almost unrecognisable, so those keen to sample this iconic piece of maritime history should probably start saving up now.



HISTORY



LETTING HIS FOOT *do the talking*

Diversity by name, diverse by nature

It's 10 years since dance troupe Diversity leapt, spun and pirouetted into our collective consciousnesses in clinching the 2009 *Britain's Got Talent* title.

While the collective initially embarked on a global trail of sell-out performances and media adulation, the last dance usually comes around rather quickly, with these talented street dancers frequently tipped to be ready to go back to rather more normal existences.

And yet, nobody has told Diversity, it seems. Across multiple tours, holiday park residences, one-off shows, TV specials and special appearances, the strength of the group's talent has kept them in demand.

Perhaps it's the style, energy and passion with which they undertake their craft, perhaps it's the Simon Cowell effect; or perhaps the credit should go to Ashley Banjo, Diversity's lead-out man whose charisma, charm and personality has enabled him to forge his own career whilst sustaining the group's.

The 30-year-old has just enjoyed another memorable stint on hit ITV show *Dancing on Ice*, as a judge working alongside Jason Gardiner, Jayne Torvill and Christopher Dean. That follows his commitment to Sky1's talent show *Got To Dance*, plus appearances on everything from *Flirty Dancing* to *The Apprentice*, *The Cube*, *The Real Hustle* and *Catchphrase*.

While panel and game shows show Banjo is as comfortable with light entertainment as he is reality TV, the performer, who is an official ambassador for the United Dance Organisation, knows where his heart is.

He said: "Everything I do is there for me to bring my passion and enthusiasm for dance to the fore, and to get others to really appreciate the value of it."

"We're in an era where creative freedom can come in any form, so combining that sort of expression with exercise and energy remains, in my mind, the best possible way to blow away the cobwebs of everyday life. It's a performance that never ends."

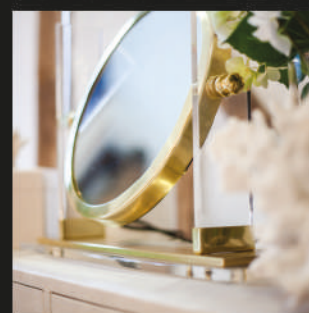
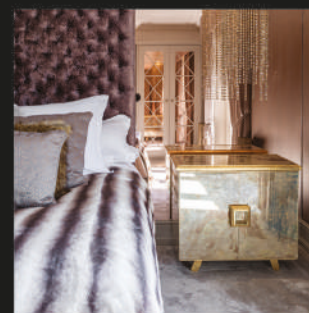


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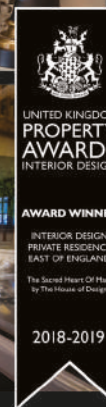


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A DESIGN FOR (ROYAL) LIFE



PRIVATE RESIDENCE, DUBLIN



PRIVATE RESIDENCE, LOS ANGELES

The inside track behind the interior designer who has been chosen to transform Harry and Meghan's new Cotswolds home.

There are very few people able to rifle through the personal belongings of the rich and famous – legally, at least – but interior designer Vicky James has been afforded that honour as she plots a 'floor to ceiling' makeover of Harry and Meghan's new Cotswolds cottage.

Vicky is known to the couple through some very salubrious showbiz connections – think the Beckhams', the Clooneys' and others – and has become renowned for her design expertise as one half of the (appropriately named) Charles & Co. Famously, she insists on needing two years to get to know a couple before laying down firm design ideas... so it seems an afternoon in B&Q simply won't cut it.

She was Global Head of Design at the Soho House clubs in London, and her eye for everything from minimalist chic to rustic homely furnishings has had her work celebrated and replicated all over the world.

It's that sort of diversity of

design that will be invaluable where the Sussexes are concerned. Meghan comes from a rather sleek and slick American life, where shine and shimmer in the reflection of the flashbulbs is the order of the day. For Harry, his heritage is more tweed than Twitter, so a sensitive and subtle combination of two very different style sensibilities will test the interior designer to her limits in what is a characterful million-pound farmhouse, untouched since the 1960s.

The rewards are simple – for the Cotswolds (The Great Tew Estate, in Chipping Norton, to be precise), another truly A-list import, and this time with a bit of regal acclaim; for Vicky, a blank cheque book on style and arguably the best entry to date on an already overcrowded curriculum vitae.

Photo credit: charlesandco.com



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Kintsugi

THE JAPANESE ART OF MENDING

Do you always throw a possession away the moment it becomes worn out or broken? Our throwaway culture could learn a lot from the Japanese, who choose instead to repair and restore their belongings.

What does Kintsugi mean?

Kintsugi literally translates as 'golden scar', which brings about images of both beauty and flaws. And this is pretty much the perfect description of what this Japanese tradition is really about. Kintsugi is a revered art form in which broken ceramics are repaired using a lacquer resin mixed with powdered gold, silver or platinum. The appearance of the scar acts as a reminder of experience which actually makes the item more valuable in their culture.

Why is it so important in Japanese culture?

Another Japanese philosophy is 'mottainai' which is their strong belief that things should not go to waste. This is in stark contrast to our consumerist society, where new is nearly always better. Instead, Japanese believe that objects should be celebrated for their history and restored so that they can continue to be revered and enjoyed.

Can anyone practice Kintsugi?

Traditionally, Kintsugi masters use urushi lacquer and rice flour to bind the ceramics together, but you can use a standard ceramic adhesive and liquid gold leaf to create the same effect.

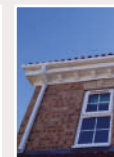
But there are other ways to incorporate Kintsugi into your life.

Upcycling an item that you no longer want, or need is a great way to embrace this Japanese tradition.

- > Instead of throwing away unwanted plates, why not turn them into a decorative photo frame or a wall clock?
- > Too many tea cups? Use them to grow herbs or other plants on your kitchen windowsill.
- > A simple wooden bowl or even a colander can be made into an innovative lampshade.

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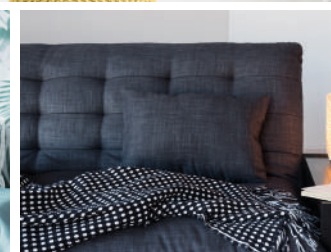
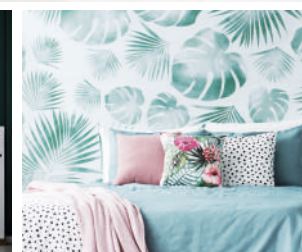
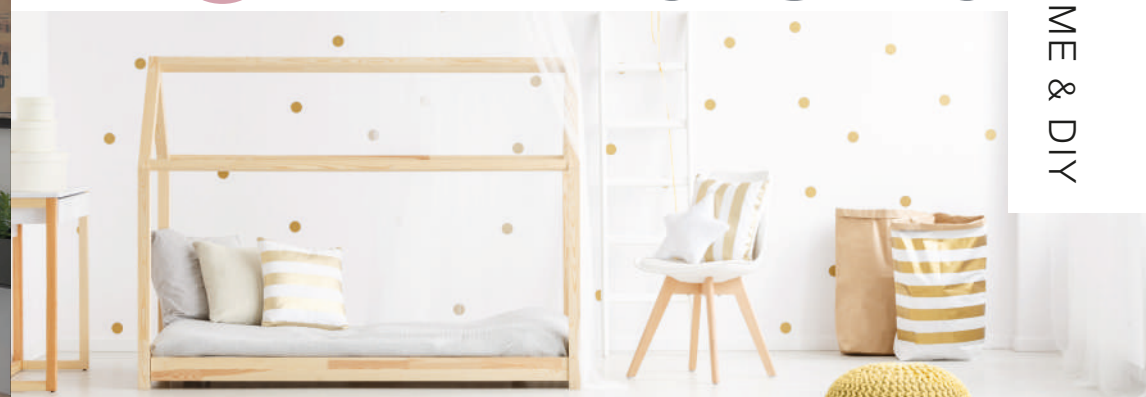
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Look up the term 'polka' and you'll be greeted with something along the lines of: 'a number of round dots repeated to form a design or regular pattern, usually on fabric'. Gosh - never did a dictionary definition fail to capture the spirit, energy, versatility and style of a design go-to that has circumnavigated generations so badly. But how can you make your home feel chic, over circus freak?

MATCHING (OR NOT)

You'll need to brave the unknown by using dots with stripes, dots with flowers, dots around or as additions to single-colour walls. The less you notice them, and the more you embed them with what's there, the better the overall effect.

MODERATION

While the polka dot is one of the style trends for 2019, don't overdo it. Your vision will take a battering if you're cementing circles all over the place, so use them for standout walls, subtle furnishings and little splashes of fun, rather than a platform for a redesign.

VARIETY

Don't get stuck doing the same thing. Mix a black polka dot lampshade with another showcasing green; use small dots on a bedsheet with big dots on a rug. Your ability to mix it up will lessen the threat of too many similar dots sending you... well, dotty.

DIVERSION

Perhaps you have a front room with a garish fireplace, or bedroom whose carpet is something out of the 1970s. Use polka dots in unusual places to distract attention – the ceiling could be a great place to start. By taking the eyeline away from offending articles, the polka dot can really be a game/room changer.

A DOT, IT'S NOT

And finally, don't get stuck on the idea that it's a circle and nothing else. These days, the polka dot represents more a repetition or splash of a solid shape; so elongate, stretch and pebble-dash to your dotty heart's content.



Get PACKING

How to move home without losing your mind

They say it's one of the most stressful things you can do... and they're right. As well as the emotional stress of upping sticks, you've got bags, boxes and bins filling every conceivable space. But separate the tasks at hand and things start to look a little more manageable.

GET HELP

1

We are a DIY nation, but with everything else that goes into moving house, getting the pros in, paying a 'man with a van', or even just rallying round mates, is better than going it alone.

START EARLY

2

No, not start early on the day of the move... start moving early! Your packing should begin as soon as you know you're going to be relocating.

THROW IT, DON'T TAKE IT

3

If time allows for a proper sort-out of your worldly possessions in the time before you move, do it. If you didn't need those Dr Martens boots in 2003 when they last saw the light of day, the chances are you won't need them in your new gaff.

BUY BOXES

4

For the sake of a few quid it's much easier to load all your stuff into standardised cardboard boxes than a combination of suitcases, bin bags and tents. You can reuse, recycle or even resell them later down the line.

GOTTA LOVE A LABEL

5

Label boxes as you go, marking clearly on them the intended room and whether the contents are for unpacking or storage.

UNPACK IN PEACE

6

Allocate one 'storage room' in your new home and unpack one box at a time. This means all items can have a designated home and won't just be thrown into an available space. It will also ensure your rooms feel free of clutter and happy places to be while you sort out the other 'new home' problems... like where the hell is the boiler?



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Construction students get a taste of the industry

A group of construction students from The Billericay School spent a morning with contractors learning about the industry recently.

They were shown around by representatives of Semptra Homes and Indecon Building Ltd, the company selected to develop 15 semi-detached and terraced houses in Roman Way, Billericay.

The properties at Roman Way will be a combination of two, three and four-bedroom houses.

Matt Brett, from the school, said: "On behalf of the students and staff who visited the site on Roman Way, I would like to say a huge thank you.

"It was a great opportunity for demonstrating how

a site should be run and how the theory the students are learning in class can be transferred into practice.

"The group of students I saw today were able to link the knowledge acquired from the site to the theory during the lesson using examples from their visit. This is something a book just cannot do.

"I look forward to following the progress of the development and the next visit."

Working in partnership with the council, and its construction contractors, Semptra is providing apprentice placements to local residents and will continue to provide work experience to students from schools undertaking construction-related learning.

Players get coaching from tennis stars

Two ex-Davis Cup players visited Billericay Lawn Tennis Club for a tennis circus recently.

Danny Sapsford and Luke Milligan ran the event and gave tennis coaching advice to all age groups.

Over 100 players and spectators from Billericay and other local clubs attended the sold out event.

During the day, players took part in coaching, a fastest serve competition, guess the balls in the basket

and an exhibition match played by Danny, Luke and Matthew Doe and Ben Stanford from Billericay and Aspire academy.

A spokesperson from Billericay Lawn Tennis Club said: "The event was a huge success and greatly enjoyed by all. A big thank you to Danny and Luke for all their efforts and enthusiasm on the day. Also thank you to the Lawn Tennis Association."



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Masonic wedding makes history for couple

A Billericay couple's dreams came true with a very special wedding and a night they will remember thanks to a Masonic Lodge in Southend.

For the bride, Elena Torrealba, it was also the opportunity to fulfil her deepest wish to honour the memory of her late grandfather, a highly respected Freemason, by getting married in a Masonic Temple.

When her now husband Amador, also a Freemason, asked members of his Lodge at Southend-on-Sea if it was possible, it started a chain of events that led to a glittering ceremony and celebration that combined a traditional Lodge meeting with a wedding and a meal afterwards on the evening of March 6.

Even though Freemasonry is hundreds of years old it is believed that this event has never happened before.

Elena said: "I know my grandfather Michael would

have been so happy. This is what I really wanted, to get married in a Masonic Temple and as I have no family here in the UK the Masons at Southend have made it really special for me.

"Someone told me that I have been married with 45 brothers and their families wishing me well – it's true and it has been a wonderful evening which I will always remember."

Centre chairman Dennis Baum, who is also a member of Southend-on-Sea Lodge, said: "Elena's mother, her only family member, could not travel here for the occasion and Amador also has no family in this country either, so for one special night we stepped in. The rest really is history – setting what we believe is a new first for Freemasonry."

News from the local policing team

This month Basildon Community Policing Team has continued to address your concerns.

We have set up an operation to tackle anti-social behaviour in the Noak Bridge area following a number of concerns raised by residents. This is named Operation Elevate and will be running for the next few weeks. We are incorporating a number of tactics including overt and covert patrols as well as preventative work in schools.

March saw a national policing operation to tackle knife crime. Operation Sceptre has seen Basildon

community policing officers implement a variety of enforcement and engagement tactics across the district.

In Billericay we have visited The Billericay School to provide advice and understanding on the consequences of carrying a knife. We have also conducted additional patrols in Lake Meadows, Sunnymede and other key locations within Billericay and we have conducted checks on knife retailers ensuring their compliance with the laws on sales of knives.



LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY

ON PATROL WITH... THE PASTORS



Street Pastors continue to patrol the night-time economy in Billericay and Brentwood trying to support anyone who is out and about and finds that they may need help or just a moment to have a chat with someone. We don't judge anyone as we are just there to help, care and listen.

We have begun training the next cohort of volunteers for these groups. Across Essex we have 19 new Street Pastor volunteers and seven new School Pastors. We recruit from the local Christian churches as we seek to encourage some of our older folk to use their life experiences in this valuable

service to the community.

This month we attended the Civic Service in Billericay, supported the ladies football team at Billericay Town, spoke on Gateway 97.8 local radio and our Rail Pastors have conducted several patrols on Greater Anglia supporting those that use the network.

We will continue to run these three separate projects as we continue to value everyone who is out and about. If we can just help one person whilst we are out, then that is a good shift.

Please email billericay@streetpastors.org.uk for more information.



Heroes to celebrate 70 years of New Town

As part of Basildon New Town's 70th anniversary, Basildon Council and Eastgate Shopping Centre are celebrating 70 years with 70 Basildon Heroes.

Heroes can be individuals, businesses or community, voluntary, education, sports or cultural organisations.

The council is looking for people or groups who have been instrumental in the development of Basildon over the past 70 years.

Councillor Kevin Blake, deputy leader of Basildon Council and chairman of the leisure, culture and environment committee, said: "This year is more than just celebrating 70 years of Basildon New Town, it's just as important to celebrate the people who in different ways have made significant contributions to its development and community."

"We've already had some nominations in which is great. I have a feeling the tough part is going to be the judging and sticking to just 70."

Nominations of up to 500 words can be submitted



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BILLERICAY TOWN FC



Photo credit: Billericay Town / Nicky Hayes Photography

Ladies are looking forward to the final

Billericay Town Ladies Manager, Kim Coster, has revealed the team can't wait to play in the Essex Women's Cup Final later this month.

After smashing Rayleigh Town 31-0 in the quarters and beating Brentwood Town 8-0 in the semi-finals, The Blues will face the current cup holders, Canvey-based C&K Basildon in the final.

Speaking to **VISION** Billericay Shenfield, Kim Coster said it is a fantastic achievement for the girls.

She said: "For the team it is absolutely fantastic. We are a new team that has come together and everyone is so proud of getting to the final. The girls are really excited, we can't wait."

At the time of writing, Billericay Ladies were sitting second in the league, which is seen as important as the final by Kim.

She added: "We are always focussing on the next game we have coming up. We are second in a tough league and we know we can't forget about that because we are in the final. But of course the final is in the back of our minds."

"We have exceeded expectations this year, we are newly promoted and are doing really well. Yes there is a long way to go, but we want to achieve and strive for the best possible finish for the season."

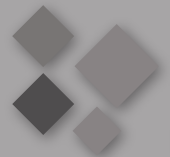
Kim has urged the fans to get down to the final on April 18 and support the team.

She added: "Our support base has grown this season and we are really grateful for everyone that turns up. They can be like the twelfth player at these games and it's really important that everyone turns up to support the girls on the day."

The final is being played on Thursday, April 18, at 7.45pm at Bowers & Pitsea's Len Salmon Stadium.



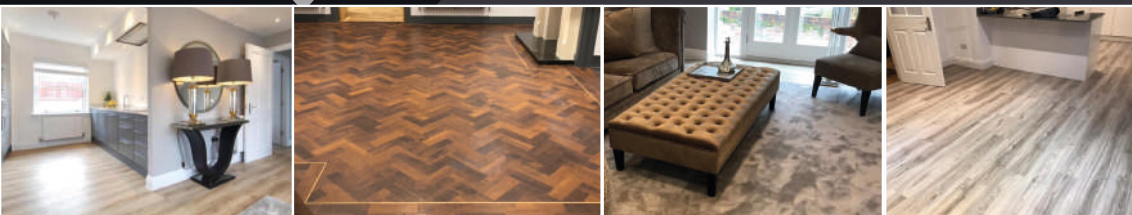
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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD



Photo credit: Google Maps

Library petition gets over 8,000 signatures

The petition to save Shenfield Library has been signed by 8,789 people – the largest number of petitioners that Essex County Council has records of receiving.

Following the petition, Save Shenfield Library, a group set up to campaign to save the library, has been able to ask Brentwood Borough Council for a motion to list the library as tier 2 (funded by Essex County Council and would be open on a part-time basis), instead of the current tier 3 (to be run by volunteers or closed).

A member of the Save Shenfield Library group said: "We hoped for 5,000 signatures but eventually got 8,789. This the largest petition in the county of Essex since records began.

"This has made some local councillors, who welcomed the modernisation and redevelopment of Shenfield Library, reconsider their stated position.

"To us, it proved that Shenfield Library was well liked by the local communities in Hutton and Shenfield.

"It provides one of the top book lending services in the county and also a valued community centre for a wide range of local activities. However, it occupies a valuable piece of land which has attracted the attention of property developers."

Despite the amount of signatures, the campaign group isn't certain the library will be saved.

The member continued: "One might hope that local politicians and the county council would listen to our petition but unfortunately this is a political decision.

"Elsewhere in Essex, local councillors have successfully lobbied for special circumstances for their libraries.

"We would encourage any residents concerned about the future for libraries in Shenfield, Brentwood or Ingatestone to make their views known to local politicians and ask what they have done to protect our libraries, and if residents are not satisfied with the answers, then to remember that they have a choice on May 2 to vote for a better representative of their views."

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Rotary club raises over £3,000 for SNAP

Brentwood a Becket Rotary Club held its annual quiz night last month.

Members raised a record £3,782.54 which was donated to charity SNAP.

The money will be used to help fund a soft play area and the activities are provided to the children and young people.

A spokesperson from the Rotary club said: "The club is pleased to support them and help raise awareness of the excellent work they do.

"Thank you to Rotarian Tony Clark who organised the event and whose hard work made it a successful fun evening."

Next year's quiz will take place on March 7, 2020.

Teenagers robbed at knifepoint on train

Passengers were forced to get off a train at Shenfield after two teenagers were robbed at knifepoint whilst it was travelling through the town.

The incident, which happened on March 6, took place on board a London-bound train travelling from Southend.

It is believed the two victims got on just outside Southend before they were targeted by the offender.

The two teens were made to hand over their phones and activated the emergency alarm before the train was brought to a stop.

Shortly after the train was evacuated so British Transport Police (BTP) could investigate.

A spokesman for BTP said: "We received a report of robbery at 4.19pm on March 6 where a youth

allegedly intimidated two teenage boys into handing over their mobile phones.

"Officers stopped the train at Shenfield and arrested the suspect, a 15-year-old boy from London, on suspicion of robbery. He remains in custody while officers carry out further enquiries."

A spokesman for Greater Anglia tweeted: "The passenger communication alarm was pulled on the 3.50pm train from Southend Victoria to London Liverpool Street due to an incident onboard.

"The British Transport Police (BTP) were called because of this incident therefore the service had to be terminated at Shenfield."

Anyone with information should contact BTP by calling 0800 40 50 40.

BURGHART for BRENTWOOD



Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar



A life-sized plastic horse was lying on its side surrounded by fully-kitted fire officers when I arrived for the launch of the Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner Roger Hirst's first Fire and Rescue Plan for Essex at the beginning of March.

The plan has been developed in partnership with Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) employees, representatives from local authorities, Essex Police and the Ambulance Service. Its eight priorities include enhancing prevention, protection and response, helping the vulnerable to stay safe, improving safety on our roads and developing and broadening the roles and range of activities undertaken by the service.

This is the first plan of its kind produced by a police, fire and crime commissioner and is a landmark for fire governance not only in Essex but for the whole country. I would expect nothing less from Roger who, in October 2017, took on the governance of

ECFRS alongside his existing responsibilities for Essex Police.

Fire officers tend to only be noticed at times of high-profile incidents involving major fires or significant rescues. But the day-to-day work they do in identifying risks and effective prevention, emergency planning and specialist rescue and response training is the bedrock of the service and makes Essex a far safer place to live, work and travel. The full plan can be found at www.essex-fire.gov.uk

But what of the prone plastic horse? It was being used to illustrate the background rescue skills in which the ECFRS specialises. Essex is a county of horse enthusiasts, and from time to time their equine friends get stuck in ditches and thick mud. With the help of a large lifting device and a series of supporting straps the plastic horse was gently hoisted to its feet, to general applause from onlookers. It's good to know the Essex Fire and Rescue Service is ready for almost any eventuality, be it humans or animals needing help.

Photo credit: Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner's office


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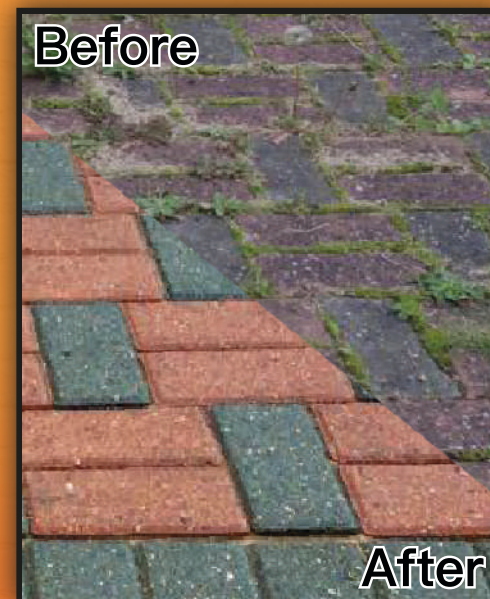
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LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD

Special Easter activity train rolls into town

The eggs for the Epping Ongar Railway Easter egg hunt have been hidden by the Easter bunny from Ongar station to Coopersale.

You can travel on an Easter Activity Train to find them all.

There will be direct buses from Shenfield to the railway, making it easily accessible for all the family.

This special Easter Express train will have a magician, balloon modeller and artists on board to keep the kids happy whatever the weather.

All children will win a full-sized Easter egg when they present their completed sheets to the Easter

bunny's representatives.

The Epping Ongar Railway is the longest steam railway in Essex and with direct buses from Shenfield or Epping, and easy access from the M11, is very easy to get to.

The Central Line from Stratford takes less than 30 minutes to Epping and when you get there a traditional London Bus will pick you up from right outside and take you direct to North Weald.

Tickets for the Easter egg hunt are on sale now.

For more details, visit www.eorailway.co.uk/events/easter-egg-hunt

Spring fair to be held this month

The Brentwood, Hutton & Billericay branch of Bloodwise was inaugurated in 1965 and has raised over £1,000,000 – with some of the original committee members still remaining, whilst others come and go over the years.

Bloodwise (previously known as Leukaemia & Lymphoma Research) is a charity dedicated to finding better treatments for the many blood cancers.

All monies raised go towards developing better tests so that people can get an accurate diagnosis

more quickly, with better tests and kinder treatments.

It also provides expert information and practical support for everyone affected by blood cancer.

A lot of work is put into organising the various money raising events throughout the year, such as quizzes, race nights, bazaars, spring and winter fairs, wine tasting – to name a few.

The next event will be the Spring Fair at Shenfield Parish Hall on April 13 from 10am to noon.

For more information phone local secretary on 01277 214499.

There's a simple innocence about Ed Sheeran that, right from the word go, made him instantly likeable. At a time when the male singer/songwriter concept was in danger of eating itself whole, along came a ginger, slightly chubby, badly dressed and lazily tattooed bloke with a guitar; ready to change the way we viewed this somewhat overplayed commodity.

Indeed, to list all the things he wasn't – such as polished, punctuated, preened and painfully predictable, like so many of his peers – is to miss the point, since it's the absence of all those things that made (and continues to make) Sheeran interesting.

His early songs spoke of the usual romantic rollercoaster material, but around all those warbling odes of emotional angst are references to drinking, sex and nights out. While guitar-strum chords flicker through tracks, they often give way to hiphop-esque drops, booming, shouty interludes and the overall impression that Sheeran is genuinely an artist doing this for himself, not for the plaudits or the considerable financial bounty.

Speaking of earnings, though, we shouldn't ignore the fact that the 28-year-old, who attended the National Youth Theatre before nailing his colours to making music, is said to be worth a cool £85million. But while there are enough modern musicians made rich by the machine, Sheeran's explosive talent has always been the driver, and this was no better referenced than in his attempts to break America – something even the very best have failed to do.

Julie Greenwald, CEO of Atlantic Records, said upon hearing Sheeran for the first time: "There was this slightly awkward guy, with a guitar, sat on a stage he'd placed in the centre of a music venue here in LA, surrounded by rap artists and hip-hop producers. I was ready for him to die on stage, yet within two songs he had everyone up. It was a frenzy and I've never seen anything before or since."

Greenwald signed him the next day.

His popularity Stateside is now on a par with here, but it has only come about as a result of hard work, tenacity, personality and almost non-stop touring.

When the Suffolk-raised star – who in February picked up the Global Success Brit Award for the second year in a row – allows himself a return to home comforts, the press are largely respectful of his privacy, even if in recent weeks he has found himself defending the addition of a new duckpond to his sprawling property. The suggestion has been that he is planning a succession of late-night watersports parties.

"It's just a pond... to feed ducks in," came the witty retort.

At least he has found time away from the spotlight to marry childhood sweetheart Cherry Seaborn. The pair wed before Christmas in a private ceremony at his Suffolk estate attended by only 40 people. There were no celebrities invited, no *Hello!* magazine photoshoots, and barely a smattering of confetti.

That Sheeran is finding time to pull himself back from the limelight is a good thing, and he does it so well. Towards the end of 2015 he began to withdraw totally from view, freezing his social media accounts and refusing interviews.

He returned in 2017 with the album *Divide*, his most successful yet. It sold 672,000 copies in its first week, making it the fastest-selling album by a male artist in the United Kingdom. It also topped the charts in 14 countries.

Divide won a Grammy Award for Best Pop Vocal Album, meaning that this most recent two-year lull, means (a) his return is inevitable, and (b) when it comes, it will be worthwhile.

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Basil

Basil loves the light so a warm, sunny spot, (preferably inside), is a must. Place either a seed or starter plant in well-drained, moist soil and give additional water when the surrounding soil is dry to touch. If you plant basil outside, make sure you shelter it from harsh winds.

Best for aiding stomach aches, loss of appetite and fluid retention.

Coriander

This fragrant herb, most known for use in curries, is extremely easy to grow and very difficult to kill. A winning combination for those new to the herb-growing business. Sow between August and September if possible, in either a small pot or directly into the ground.

Use to help combat nausea, diarrhoea, wind and other digestion problems.

Sage

You can grow this classic herb from a seed either in a small pot on the windowsill or in the garden in as sunny a spot as possible. A sage plant can go without water for quite some time without dying so it is a good option if you are prone to forgetfulness.

Sage has been used to help delay Alzheimer's disease, aid a restful night's sleep and help strengthen weak bones.

Mint

Mint is a great starter herb that will thrive in a container on your kitchen windowsill. Simply take a few tip cuttings of about five to six inches from an established plant. It doesn't need too much sunlight, but likes a lot of water and needs to be picked regularly.

Menthol has a cooling effect and is great for soothing a sore throat. It is also known for combatting indigestion or aiding an upset stomach.



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Women's Health – Surviving the menopause.

Wednesday 10th April 2019 at 6.30pm

This event is for women who are approaching or suffering from the effects of menopause.

The event will include a presentation from Consultant Gynaecologist, Ms Seema Bagtharia, on the types of treatments which are available, as well as getting more information on what to consider if you're thinking about treatment.

Considering Cosmetic Surgery?

Thursday 25th April 2019 from 6.30pm

This free event is for anyone who is thinking about cosmetic surgery and would like to explore options for treatment and would like more information regarding procedures and costings.

The event will give you the opportunity to speak to Mr Venkat Ramakrishnan, or Ms Kallirroi Tzafetta, Consultant Plastic Surgeons, during a complimentary one-to-one advice session.

A Guide to Weight Loss Surgery.

Thursday 25th April at 6.30pm

This event is for anyone who is overweight and would like to explore their options for treatment and would like more information regarding procedures and costings.

The event will include a presentation from Consultant General Surgeon, Mr Sanjay Agrawal, on the types of treatments that are available as well as getting more information on what to consider if you're thinking about treatment.

Come along to these events to get your questions answered or simply listen to some good advice.

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National **STOP SNORING** *Week: April 22 - 29*

Thirty four per cent of Brits have a snoring problem, which can be a living (definitely not sleeping) nightmare for the partners of sufferers. But fear not, follow these simple snoring remedies and you'll be snoozing softly in no time.

Z. AVOID ALCOHOL

Although many people think that alcohol helps you nod off, it actually disrupts your sleep cycle significantly. Specifically relating to snoring, it reduces the resting tone of the muscles in your throat making you more likely to snore.

Zz. STOP SMOKING

Cigarette smoke can irritate the lining of both your throat and nose causing swelling. This, in turn, decreases your airflow making snoring more likely.

Zzz. CHANGE YOUR SLEEPING POSITION

Sleeping on your back is the worst position for snorers as it can make the base of your tongue collapse onto the back of your throat, creating a loud, vibrating sound as you sleep. Instead, aim to sleep on your side.

Zzzz. LOSE WEIGHT

Snoring can affect both heavy and lighter individuals, however if your snoring problem only started when you gained weight, or it has got worse since you piled on the pounds, then the extra fat around your neck could be squeezing your throat, resulting in snoring.

Zzzzz. ALLEVIATE ALLERGIES

Even if you are not aware that you have a particular allergy, many people are irritated by dust on their pillowcases. Make sure you change your pillows regularly and dust your ceiling fan if you have one. Pets who sleep on the bed can also aggravate the problem.

Zzzzzz. PRACTICE GOOD SLEEPING HABITS

Working long hours, being glued to technical devices before bed and not prioritising rest properly can cause over-tiredness. This makes you sleep more deeply causing your muscles to become floppy, increasing your likelihood of snoring.



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| Place your index finger gently on your outer eyelids
| Look upwards and lift your lower eyelids, creating a squinting effect | Relax your facial muscles and then repeat 10 times.

*The Big 'O'***Best for sagging skin, particularly jowls**

Make an 'O' shape with your mouth, tucking your lips over your teeth | Smile as widely as you can, ensuring your teeth remain hidden by your lips | Repeat five times | Make the 'O' shape again and this time place one finger on your chin | Move your jaw up and down | Relax your facial muscles and then repeat five times.

*The Backup Botox***Best for stubborn forehead lines**

Place both your hands on your forehead with your fingers facing inwards | Spread your fingers out between your hairline and your eyebrows | Firmly sweep your fingers outwards across your forehead | Repeat 10 times.

*The Face Firmer***Best for tightening your neck and jaw, and the prevention of double chins**

Pucker your lips from one side of your face to the other (try and stretch them as widely as you can) | Turn your head sideways and lift it to a 45 degree angle | You should feel your neck muscles stretching | Hold for five seconds | Relax your mouth and repeat five times on each side.

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BEAUTY

Colour me...

You've probably already started shopping for your Spring/Summer wardrobe, but did you know that the easiest way to update your look for a new season is with a different hair colour?

Blonde Bombshells

WOMEN: If you toned down your platinum blonde locks in favour of a more golden-honey tone over the winter months, then now is the time for a refresh. Baby blonde is the on-trend colour for light haired lasses this summer.

MEN: For a slightly subtler look for men, ash blonde highlights are the way to go.

Brilliant Brunettes

WOMEN: Subtle golden highlights are ideal for those with chestnut coloured hair.

MEN: Rusty copper is perfect for men who want to brighten up their look for the warmer months. This shade suits those with pale skin tones the best.

Go Bold on Go Home

WOMEN: If you are daring when it comes to your hair colour and you have previously rocked the silver trend, then you will love this season's must-have hair colour – inky black. Be warned, it is not for the faint hearted.

MEN: On the other end of the colour spectrum, men who want the wow factor should embrace an all-over ice-white bleach. Although we recommend having this done by a professional to avoid any unwanted orange or green.

Let's Get Colourful

WOMEN: We know pink hair has been doing the rounds for a few years now, but this time it is cotton-candy pink as opposed to a more rose gold hue. Other colours seen on the runway include lavender and bright orange.

MEN: Now this is exciting, a bright blue denim shade has been seen on male models all over Instagram and is the perfect colour for those wanting a cutting-edge style.

...beautiful

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Egg-cellent Easter Crafts

Struggling with ideas to keep the kids entertained? Then you'll be egg-cited to try these easy Easter activities.

Paint your own Easter egg

You will need:

- Hard boiled eggs
- Food colouring
- 1 tsp white vinegar
- Paints

How to make:

- Fill a plastic container with ½ cup of water, vinegar and 20 drops of food colouring
- Place the egg on a spoon and submerge in the water making sure all is covered
- Soak for five minutes
- Alternatively, for a two-tone egg, soak one half in one colour and the other in another.
- Leave to dry and then decorate further with paints.

For a stripey design, place rubber bands around your egg before dipping in dye, or use a white crayon to draw an image or message that will stay visible after dipping.

Design your own felt Easter egg

You will need:

- Coloured felt
- Embroidery floss
- Poly-fill
- Ribbon

How to make:

- Cut out two identical egg shapes in your chosen felt colour
- Stitch the two pieces together leaving one end open
- Fill with poly-fill and sew together
 - Using a different colour of felt, cut out some Easter-themed shapes such as flowers or bunnies
 - Sew on to your egg.



KIDS



TRAVEL



WHAT GOES ON TOUR...

Whether your passion is booze, bungee-jumping or the Bible, there is an organised tour holiday for you.

In an era where our power of choice has never been greater, there is a strange revolution taking hold – a return to the package holiday... except, with a difference.

The package holiday of the 1980s was your flight, a 3-star hotel in Tenerife and enough booze to sink the Titanic. These days, the appetite is more for food excursions, sports event tours, cycling or walking weeks, or in pursuit of extreme sports thrills. In short, whatever your passion, this new type of break is in fashion.

Travel experts believe our busy lives have made us more structured, even when we're meant to be kicking back. In 2019, people actually enjoy planning, and more than ever before a holiday is a chance for new activities rather than the repetition of the office.

As long as we don't feel we're being herded around like sheep on a tourist trail, we have confidence in holiday providers – aided and assisted by the immediate availability of online reviews – to give us a taste of something new, and in all the right doses.

What's more, it's believed the increased reliance of social media as a method of communicating means we're beginning to crave genuine human contact more than we did before, so rather than avoid the Watson's or the Winterbottom's on holiday, we want to ski down a mountain with them.

There's also the choice factor. The internet has made even the very smallest Highlands canoe club globally searchable, and travel agents are now as switched on to the smaller, more bespoke experience providers as they are the big operators.

All that means the possibilities for adventure on our holidays stretches far beyond whether to choose the Piquol or the Pinot... although that decision must still come into it at some point.

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SMART WORKS

THE SMARTEST OF THE ROYALS?

MEGHAN MARKLE IS UNVEILED AS THE ROYAL PATRON FOR SMART WORKS

As if the Duchess of Sussex Meghan Markle isn't busy enough as it is, at the start of this year she was announced as the Royal Patron for Smart Works, a charitable initiative that aims to help women in the UK back into work.

Smart Works has been operating in six UK cities since 2013, helping back into employment thousands of women who have found themselves out of the loop in terms of work opportunities and confidence. Often this comes about because of enforced parenting breaks, but Smart Works has quickly become an inspirational force, on-hand to offer tools, resources and the encouragement to



Photo credit: Alan Fraser Images/Shutterstock.com

get back out into the workplace.

"It is very easy to get side-tracked," says Smart Works founder Juliet Hughes-Hallett. "Getting back into work isn't just a financial thing; it's something women crave as a way of restoring a sense of 'self' again."

On a practical level, Smart Works looks to help women finetune interview skills, but beyond that also provides interview clothes, advice on education and support for the various challenges of home life.

A registered charity, a third of people who go to Smart Works have already endured over

50 interview rejections, and in many ways, the directive is perfect for Meghan. A self-professed feminist, supporter of women's rights and passionate advocate for personal ambition and work ethic, the 37-year-old undertook a similar initiative back at Northwestern University in Chicago when offering prom dresses to those who couldn't afford to buy their own.

When joining the royal family, Meghan may have landed herself the most unconventional of jobs, but as this latest project proves, her compassion for these sorts of projects sees her still wonderfully rooted and connected to the person in the street.



BUSINESS & FINANCE

HOW TO SIDE-STEP RETIREMENT REMORSE

The good news is that most pensioners thoroughly enjoy the freedom that retirement brings. They can pursue their hobbies, take more holidays and spend more time with their family and friends. When people have regrets, it's often to do with the way they planned for their retirement and the decisions they did or didn't take about their finances while there was still time.

PLAN EARLY: Many people reach retirement and wish they'd put more into their pension plan in their peak earning years. Keeping a regular eye on how much you're saving towards your pension will ensure that you know how much you're likely to have when you retire and give you the chance to increase your contributions if you can afford to. Getting a state pension forecast is important too; many people overestimate how much their state pension will be worth and aren't sure at what age they will receive it.

A recent report from Aviva¹ warns that millions of workers risk sleepwalking their way to a pension that will, in effect, be less than the minimum wage at retirement. Don't let this happen to you.

TAKE ADVICE: Not getting appropriate advice is often highlighted as a regret by those people who feel they made poor financial choices when

they retired. People retiring today can expect to have several decades of active life ahead of them. Making sure that their funds don't run out too soon can often be a major concern. Getting good financial advice can help ensure that you have a plan in place that meets your likely pattern of expenditure and keep funds in reserve in case you need to pay for nursing or residential care.

The sooner you start your pension, the longer your money will have to grow. If you're self-employed, an employee, work part-time, run your own business or have accumulated pension pots with past employers, we can offer you the advice you need.

If you haven't looked at your pension plan recently, then please contact Andy Costin, independent financial adviser on 01277 654153 to arrange a review.

¹ Aviva, Sept 2018

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PROTECTING YOUR PROPERTY PORTFOLIO

As a landlord you're in a unique position in that your property isn't a home, it's a business. From a large stately home to a city-centre flat, regardless of your property size you'll want to protect your investment. That's where landlord insurance through Coversure comes in, helping to protect you from a range of risks that modern-day landlords face.

Considering your property could be affected by unruly tenants, natural disasters and thieves, it's crucial to ensure you get the correct level of protection. Below we'll highlight the key components you should consider including in your cover.

Buildings Cover

This does what it says on the tin and helps to protect you against the costs to repair or rebuild the property if it is damaged or destroyed by fires, flood or accidental damage. This forms the cornerstone of most property insurance based policies.

Contents Cover

Do you furnish your property for your tenants? If you

leave contents in your rented property, contents cover is crucial to keep you protected. From sofas to white goods, with contents cover you can gain financial assistance with repairing or replacing your contents.

Rent Guarantee

As a landlord, if you're not getting rent, you're losing out on your investment. So if anything forces your property to be vacant, such as renovation or repair, rent guarantee can continue to provide an income to you.

Liability Cover

If a tenant or a visitor ends up gaining an injury, becomes ill or damages their possessions due to a fault of your property then you could be held accountable in a court of law. Landlord's liability cover helps to protect you against the compensation from these claims.

Want To Know More?

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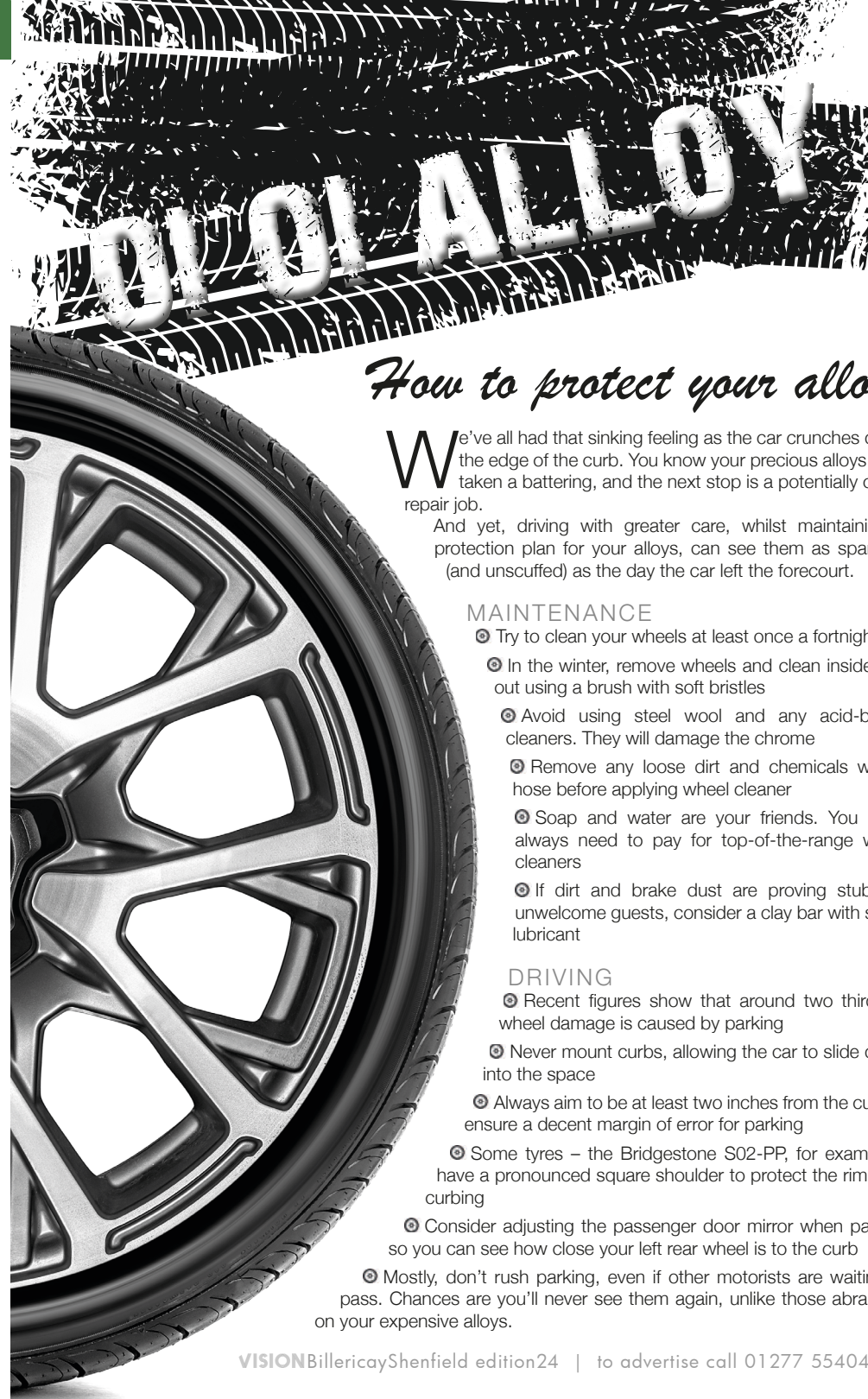


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How to protect your alloys

We've all had that sinking feeling as the car crunches down the edge of the curb. You know your precious alloys have taken a battering, and the next stop is a potentially costly repair job.

And yet, driving with greater care, whilst maintaining a protection plan for your alloys, can see them as sparkling (and unscuffed) as the day the car left the forecourt.

MAINTENANCE

- ③ Try to clean your wheels at least once a fortnight
- ③ In the winter, remove wheels and clean inside and out using a brush with soft bristles
- ③ Avoid using steel wool and any acid-based cleaners. They will damage the chrome
- ③ Remove any loose dirt and chemicals with a hose before applying wheel cleaner
- ③ Soap and water are your friends. You don't always need to pay for top-of-the-range wheel cleaners
- ③ If dirt and brake dust are proving stubborn unwelcome guests, consider a clay bar with some lubricant

DRIVING

- ③ Recent figures show that around two thirds of wheel damage is caused by parking
- ③ Never mount curbs, allowing the car to slide down into the space
- ③ Always aim to be at least two inches from the curb to ensure a decent margin of error for parking
- ③ Some tyres – the Bridgestone S02-PP, for example – have a pronounced square shoulder to protect the rim from curbing
- ③ Consider adjusting the passenger door mirror when parking so you can see how close your left rear wheel is to the curb
- ③ Mostly, don't rush parking, even if other motorists are waiting to pass. Chances are you'll never see them again, unlike those abrasions on your expensive alloys.

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PUZZLES

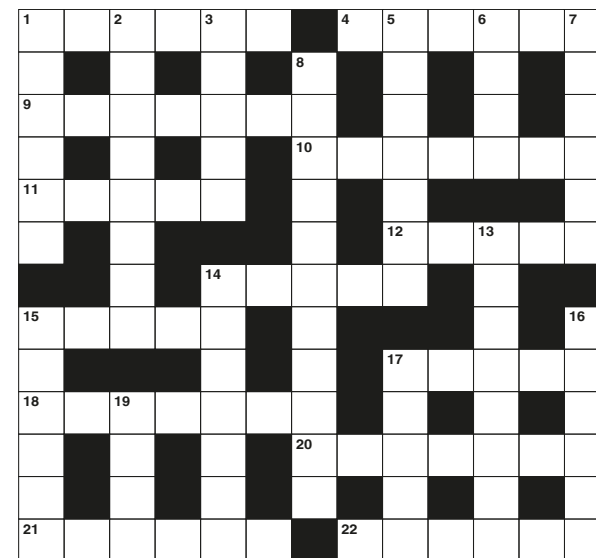
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

ACROSS

1. Reach (6)
4. Goes round the edge of (6)
9. Language spoken in Rome (7)
10. People who rent property (7)
11. Domineering (5)
12. Humble (5)
14. Lewis (anag) (5)
15. Exceed (5)
17. Firearm (5)
18. Envisage (7)
20. Small rounded lumps (7)
21. Soaks in liquid (6)
22. Stick of coloured wax (6)

DOWN

1. With hands on the hips (6)
2. Conduct business (8)
3. Coldly (5)
5. Dog shelters (7)
6. ___ Giggs: former footballer (4)
7. Sloppy (6)
8. Clever (11)
13. Deplorably (8)
14. Pay homage to (7)



15. Makes available for sale (6)

19. Scarce (4)

16. Diminish (6)

17. Traveller on horseback (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ A male ostrich can roar like a lion
- ▶ Bats are the only mammal that can fly
- ▶ If you leave a goldfish in the dark, it will become pale
- ▶ The sentence 'The quick brown fox jumps over a lazy dog' uses every letter of the alphabet
- ▶ On average, an alligator will live for 30 to 50 years
- ▶ Flamingos eat with their heads upside down
- ▶ A group of owls is called a parliament
- ▶ If you lift a kangaroo's tail off the ground it can't hop. They use them for balance

SUDOKU

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



SPORT



Photo credit: ALI HADEREPA/REX/Shutterstock

WHY THE ROGER FEDERER MACHINE JUST KEEPS ON DELIVERING

In early March, Roger Federer's forehand smashed yet another milestone in a long and illustrious tennis career by picking up his milestone 100th ATP Tour title. The Dubai Tennis Championship gong made him only the second player in the open era to reach that golden century. His opponent was up and coming Greek starlet and reigning Next Gen ATP Finals champion Stefanos Tsitsipas, and it took just a break in either set to see the Swiss home 6-4, 6-4.

Federer now has only one player in front of him in the all-time winners list, American Jimmy Connors, who has 109 titles to his name. Without even factoring in the supreme talent he has had to overcome in this fiercely competitive generation of

tennis, some of the statistics that make up Federer's 100 titles are already unparalleled.

For example, two-thirds of his final wins have been by straight-sets, and he has won 20 of those tournaments without dropping a set. In addition, the 37-year-old has won four competitions without being broken on his own serve, defended a title 35 times, and played 50 different opponents across finals.

Belying age has helped Federer stay competitive and that feat is demonstrated by the fact that 68 of his final wins have been against younger players, with Spanish left-hander Rafael Nadal the man he has overcome the most (with 10 victories).

Nine of his century of championships have, maybe aptly, been in Basel, yet he can move Wimbledon up alongside his birthplace this year when he looks to add to his eight titles in SW19, including five consecutive wins from 2003 to 2007.

Federer shows no sign of slowing down, but surely the 109 of Connors is out of reach? Isn't it?

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WHAT'S ON

in your area

Brentwood Wine Society

Shenfield Parish Hall, 60 Hutton Road,
Brentwood, CM15 8LB
Second Tuesday of the month, 8pm – 10pm



stock image

The Society's aim is to help members improve their experience, understanding and enjoyment of wine. Invited wine experts present samples of wines from a country or region of the winemaking world.

Through these tastings, we have a broadened interest which has led to a deeper knowledge and love of wine.

If you would like to come along in the first instance for a free tasting email stephen.hill33@btopenworld.com or call 07776031747.

Spring Fair

Shenfield Parish Hall, 60 Hutton Road,
Shenfield, CM15 8LB

April 13, 10am – noon

The Brentwood, Hutton & Billericay Branch of Bloodwise is holding a spring fair. Many stalls including home-made cakes and preserves, jewellery, spring plants and goodies, tombola, jewellery, toys etc. All proceeds go towards funding research into hopefully one day finding cures for the many types of blood cancer. Entrance fee 50p.

Gone Too Soon

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

April 15, 7pm – 9pm

'Gone Too Soon' is a local bereavement support group for parents who have lost a son or daughter of all ages, in any circumstances and however long ago.

Meetings are held on the third Monday of each month. For further details or a chat, please contact Lyn on 07387-805406 or email lyn-currie@hotmail.co.uk or www.gonetoosoon.online

Billericay Mayflower Twinning Association

Great Burstead Church Hall, 111 Church
Street, Billericay, CM11 2TR

April 26, 8pm – 10pm

The unveiling of a programme for Mayflower 2020, the 400th commemoration of Billericay's link with the Mayflower will take place.

Plus a brief talk on Plymouth Colony, a quiz, displays, nibbles and drinks will be provided.

This event is free. Places are limited so please email Geoff Douglas to secure your place.

Email membership@billericaytwinning.org.uk or call 01277 654228.

A Mummers' Play: St George and the Dragon

Corner of Billericay High Street and
St Edith's Lane

April 27, 11am and 11.45am



Photo credit: Mayflower Morrismen

Mayflower Morris Men will perform their Mummers' play on April 27.

The event is free and suitable for all ages.

Call Julian Whybra 01277 654228 or visit www.mayflowermorris.com for further details.

Japanese Tea Ceremony - Urasenke Tankokai Association

The FOLD, Billericay Arts Association,
72 Laindon Road, Billericay, CM12 9LD

April 29, 6.45pm for a 7pm start

The Japanese tea ceremony was established in the 15th century as a sophisticated manner of hospitality. It appreciates and respects beauty in everyday existence.

Visitors very welcome – first visit free.

Call 01277 213610 or email kirsten.yeates@tiscali.co.uk for further information



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