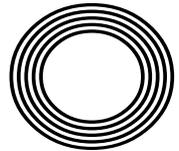




**OLIVIA
COLMAN
TAKES TO
THE THRONE**

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Top tips for a restful sleep

THE HOLIDAYS ARE COMING
How Coca-Cola stole Christmas



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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

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

Whoever said 'time flies when you're having fun' probably had kids in the vicinity.

Our firstborn, Max, just celebrated his first birthday, and marked the occasion by 'rearranging' various shelf items, throwing water over the floor and chewing on the remote control.

In fact, come to think of it, he's been 'celebrating' like that for the past few months. The pleasures of parenting have certainly become a central part of the Allen household, and I'm excited to announce another little person will be arriving next year.

While growing a family offers a flurry of new milestones to celebrate, it also makes you realise how quickly life moves on.

With that in mind festive plans are coming together quickly, and there's plenty of evidence of that in this month's bumper edition, just don't leave your **VISION** magazine on a low shelf or it may not be there when you get back.

In local news, a mother and son win an award from the Prime Minister, a delivery driver gets in the Christmas spirit and a burglar is jailed after stealing from vulnerable victims.

I would like to wish all our readers and advertisers a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Thanks for reading,

Nik



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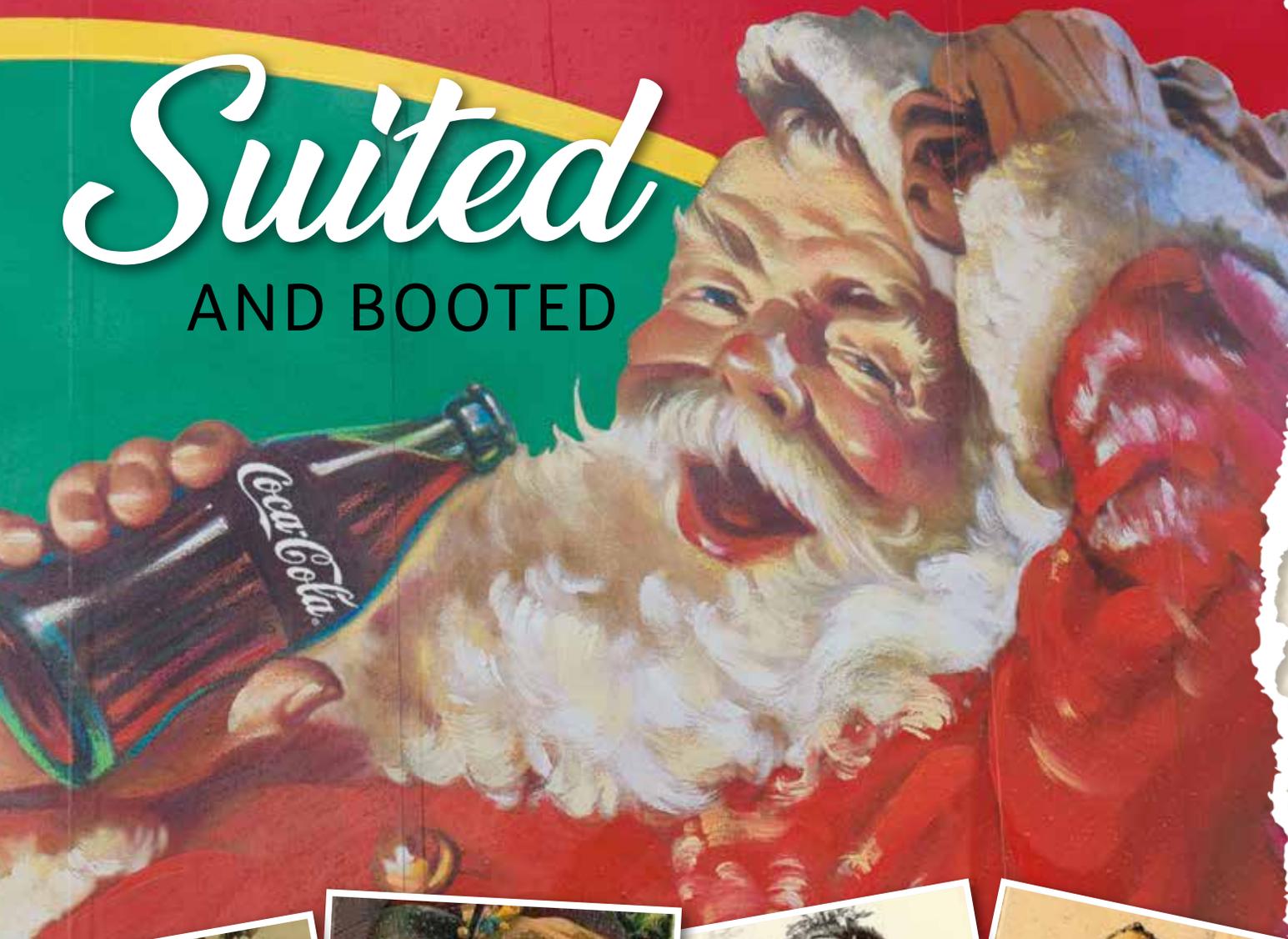
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Suited AND BOOTED



If you thought it was just modern-day society that's taken in by the strength of marketing, think again. Here's the story of how Christmas was stolen not by the Grinch, but by the soft drinks brand.

He's arguably the most iconic and most easily recognised person on the planet, but even Santa is a Coca-Cola marketing team's plaything, and the evidence is staring us right in the face. That's right – that trademark red-and-white suit that we have come to know, love and welcome into our homes on Christmas Eve is a brand team's creation that's straight out of the marketing textbook.

Before Coca-Cola sidled up to the most travelled man on the planet, Saint Nicholas could be seen in all manner of colours, clothes and designs. Pictures exist of him dressed in a tan-coloured suit; others show him wearing shades of light and dark blue; while in some pictures he comes across as a somewhat sinister elf-like character dressed in green as he dots from house to house.

It was only natural then that, as the power of the media grew in the lead-up to World War II, so too should a universal image of the great man emerge. And siding with the world's biggest-selling soda – and its red-and-white livery – well, it was a match made in heaven... or, at least, Lapland.

And that, boys and girls, is the story of how Santa's red-and-white suit was created by the guys at Coca-Cola.

Or is it...?

While the tale of Santa taking on the colours of the world's leading drinks brand is a water-cooler classic that has done the rounds for years, it is only actually half-true.

That famous fluffy livery was actually to be found on pictures of the great man going back into the nineteenth century. It was cartoonist Thomas Nast who truly popularised the use of red and white with his hugely successful sketch series in the 1870s. And some believe Coca-Cola wasn't even the first drinks brand to popularise the figure, with carbonated water producers White Rock using him in adverts from the early 1920s.

However, where Coca-Cola can take credit is in capitalising on the big guy's popularity. Consider White Rock had 90 per cent of the fizzy water market back in 1920s America, and with imitation being the greatest form of flattery and all that, logic follows that the brand Coca-Cola adopted its own version of Santa (holding a bottle).

With the help of illustrator Haddon Sundblom, it evolved the big man into an even stronger caricature of himself. This served to vanquish the various other images of Father Christmas who back then could still be found dressed in such variant colours, all the while subconsciously linking the drink to a figure representing kindness, generosity and happiness in the minds of youngsters (and a few adults).

Put it this way: try finding a festive Coca-Cola image that doesn't feature its brand ambassador, and you'll appreciate that while the American drinks giant may not have chosen the colours for Santa, it has certainly ensured he's staying dressed in his perfect red-and-white suit, and we'll all drink to that.



Photo credit: www.solosophie.com



Photo credit: www.colour.sdc.org.uk



Photo credit: Thomas Nast/AP



Photo credit: www.publicdomainreview.org

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THE CROWN

NEW SERIES, NEW DECADE, NEW CAST – THE RETURN OF *THE CROWN*

As new series of prime-time drama go, *The Crown* has been a long time in coming. It's been two years since Claire Foy stepped aside as Queen Elizabeth, and in the intervening passage of time we've had a real royal wedding (Harry and Meghan), royal births, the Windsors taking a national newspaper to court and all manner of rumours regarding the seedy and nefarious actions of some in lofty positions. If all this were to be wrapped into a 10-part Netflix drama we'd probably suggest it was too far-fetched.

As it is, we're about to be treated to something rather more palatable, surely, as Olivia Colman CBE steps into the role of HRH for the first time.

The 45-year-old's long-awaited debut reflects the true evolution of an actress. Beginning at the much-renowned Footlights Dramatic Club at Cambridge University, she shared the stage with the likes of David Mitchell, Richard Ayoade and Peter Serafinowicz, before excelling in *Rev*, *Broadchurch*, *The Night Manager* and *The Favourite*.

Her landing in such a major Netflix product feels perfectly timed, having just been awarded a CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for her services to drama.

The new series also welcomes Helena Bonham Carter (Princess Margaret), Ben Daniels (Lord Snowdon) and an entirely new cast, with a storyline that builds from the 1970s, broaching the Queen and Prince Philip's tumultuous relationship.

As for Colman CBE, her pursuit of creative endeavour is as premium fuelled now as at any time in the past.

"Working makes me happy and I do struggle to say no," she admits. "I've an inherent fear of being pigeon-holed, and I think as a result of that I reach out in as many different ways as I can."

The good news for fans of *The Crown* is that given the series are shot back to back, season four will be along very shortly. Set in the 1980s, it will deliver Margaret Thatcher (Gillian Anderson) and Emma Corrin (Princess Diana)... and no doubt a yuppie or two.

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DESIGN FOR LIFE

DAVID LINLEY AND INTERIOR DESIGN'S MISSING LINK

HOME & DIY

Talk about interior design, architecture, design and craftsmanship, and so much of what you hear revolves around the intentions, desires and whims of the designers themselves. It's almost as if they are going to be the ones living in the spaces they curate.

Clearly, in most cases they're not, and that's where the Linley stable of designers and architects takes a different approach towards creating artistic excellence.

At the heart of Linley is the intention to style a client's own vision before anything else. Sure, the Belgravia-based experts, who have been a major player in working with upmarket clients for more than 30 years, can extol the virtues of custom-made and tailored cabinets, furniture and kitchen spaces, but unless it has client direction, a project won't begin.

When bespoke designs are brought forward, Linley designs favour a few simple rules: items are sleek and sharp, utilising



whites, greys, blacks and browns, with references to art deco, 1970s elegance with polished tones. They are happy to juxtapose styles and periods to create rooms with distinction and flair, but the celebration of eras is without brazen, shouty, disturbing colours. In short, subtlety is key.

Small item collections are often in glassware or polished wood (such as boxes, desk items and picture frames), with a fascination for intensity, detail and perfect lines.

A Linley home is one to be viewed from many angles, with interiors that are to be stroked, brushed and admired; although the attention to detail demanded of everything, from intricate objects to sweeping units that glide into the distance, come with price tags to match, so beware.



Photo credit: blog.davidlinley.com



urban hype



OWN A HOOVER AND A RUBBISH BAG?
You've already qualified as an urban minimalist

Talk of urban minimalist design brings about notions of wealthy Docklands apartments littered with little more than a table candle, a coffee cup and a laptop.

And yet the achieving of a clean, clear, space-driven home isn't out of reach, yuppie living or not. Ultimately, where urban minimalist design succeeds, it's in the understanding that you are defined not by your possessions, by your furniture.

Wind back a decade or so and minimalism would have sat much more on the side of brutalism, with polished concrete floors, conflicting wood and terracotta, and sleeping arrangements that appeared more akin to a night in the cells.

These days the rules are relaxed, and urban minimalism dives further into the human need for comfort, warmth, colour and texture, without the clutter, chaos and disharmony of possessions

ruining streamlined furniture, geometric design and perfectly judged angles.

In terms of colours, the warmth of wood is a key asset. Patterned against white walls, urban minimalism allows a return to the perfect white offset, while hard floors, matched rugs and boxed rooms allow styles to merge without them spilling out into corridors or hallways.

The secret to the look is to be regimented in your approach to everyday clutter. Storage space is not a secret or an embarrassment to those wanting to pull off this look, but clearly, practical solutions need to be sought in order to maintain what is a devoted approach towards cleanliness.

Nail the ability to hide away the knick-knacks of life, and urban minimalism enables homemakers to celebrate the ultimate pleasure derived from space and shape.



“

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THE *suite-est* THING

BATHE IN THE SUCCESS OF RESTORING YOUR FAVOURITE TUB

We live in an era where throwaway culture permeates almost everything we do, and yet where bathroom suites are concerned – and baths, in particular – there is shimmering style and majestic magnificence in being tempted into a traditional tub.

That's why more and more people are now choosing to restore their tubs rather than remove and replace. Not only may this see you preserving a bathroom mainstay that is, most likely, a level up from today's cheap, lightweight fibreglass versions, but you'll save the back-breaking work of lugging the things up and down stairs too.

HERE ARE EIGHT STEPS TO GET YOUR BATH BACK ON ITS FEET:

- Sand down bumps, rust or affected areas.
- Reglaze your bath. DIY kits spell out the process, and while the fumes can be potent, you will quickly see old caulk, grime and scratches vanish.

- Give your bath a new lick of paint – for an acrylic or porcelain tub, select an EP-acrylic paint with a glossy finish; for iron bath tubs, use a latex primer then at least two coats of latex paint.
- Use a paint sprayer on the bath itself to achieve a smooth, streak-free finish inside and out.
- Apply a new coat of porcelain using a professional tradesman.
- Opt for new colours – your bath doesn't have to be white (nor that horrible lime green), so be ambitious, outlandish and brave in your new creation.
- Replace taps... a new, elegant set of taps on a bath – much like replacing kitchen unit handles – can create instant uplift.
- And finally, don't stop at the bath... because if the tiling around your tub looks like something out of a horror movie, you still won't want to take a dip. So clean, scrub, regrout and caulk your tiles to offer the cleanest finish possible.



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diy Christmas Gifts

What could be better than giving someone you love a handmade gift? Not only does it show that you have put a lot of thought and effort into it, but it can also save you money – and who knows, you might even enjoy it!

Festive Bath Bombs... you will need:

300g bicarbonate of soda | 100g citric acid | Food colouring
Essential oils – orange, cinnamon and peppermint all work well
A misting bottle | Bath bomb moulds | A muffin tin for storage

how to make

- Mix the bicarbonate of soda and citric acid together.
- Add 2-3 drops of essential oil.
- Gradually add the food colouring.
- Add water, stirring as you go – be careful not to add too much.
- Your bomb is ready when the mixture holds together in your hand.
- Add the mixture to the moulds, one half at a time, then press together.
- Carefully remove your bombs and store in tin.



Merry Mugs... you will need:

Plain white mugs | Oil-based Sharpie pens in festive colours
Alphabet letter stickers

how to make

- Create a phrase using your stickers on your mug – this could be someone's name or something festive such as "Joy" or "Happy Xmas".
- Draw polka dot shapes around the stickers in your chosen colours, then leave to dry. Be sure to cover around all the edges and in between the letters.
- Remove stickers and bake the mug in an oven at 220 degrees Celsius for 30 minutes – put in a cold oven and then turn temperature up.



Alternatively you can create any design or pattern you like, even write a message on the mug. You can also decorate with acrylic paints, nail polish and glitter.

Christmas Coasters... you will need:

4 x 4.25" square ceramic tiles | 4 old Christmas cards | Minwax Polycrylic
Mod Podge | Hot glue | Felt

how to make

- Cut each card into a 4x4 square.
- Spread Mod Podge onto each tile and apply a card to each one.
- Use a credit card to smooth out the card, then leave to dry for 2-4 hours.
- Coat each coaster with Minwax Polycrylic, then leave to dry.
- Stick a 4x4 square of felt to the bottom of each tile to protect surfaces.





LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Mother and son win Prime Minister's award

A mother from Billericay who visited 10 Downing Street with her son to collect an award for fundraising said she is very proud.

Shelley Simmonds and her son Fraser visited the famous address on October 29 to collect their Points of Light award for their continued accessibility campaigning and fundraising as Fraser is bravely battling Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, a muscle-wasting disease.

Glowing with pride for her son, Shelley told **VISION** Billericay Shenfield: "I am immensely proud and it is a day that will stay with me forever.

"From the moment I got a call from Number 10, which was really surreal, to the tour of the house, everything was amazing.

"This was definitely one of the proudest moments

of my life.

"To stand by my son's side outside the most iconic door in the world in recognition of the work he has inspired me to do is simply incredible.

"This little boy has changed my life and I am thankful for him every single day — he's perfect in every way and has taught me so much.

"I'm thankful to raise the profile of Duchenne at the Houses of Parliament and at Number 10. To talk about Fraser's life and how we adapt to the disability his condition entails was exceptional.

"It's my wish that one day society will see disabled people as equal — there are so many people working so hard to make this a reality and I'm proud to be united with them as we fight for the common goals of equality, inclusion and an accessible environment for all."



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Burglar jailed after stealing from vulnerable victims



stock image

A man who pretended to be a police officer to trick vulnerable people in Billericay has been jailed for 11 years.

Elijah King, 37, appeared at Basildon Crown Court on November 8 where he was jailed for 10 burglaries including some offences in Billericay.

He previously admitted the charges as well driving without insurance at the same court on Friday November 1.

Between April and July, police investigated reports that elderly and vulnerable people aged between 70 and 92 had been burgled.

King admitted knocking at the doors of his victims impersonating a police officer investigating counterfeit money.

The court heard how he showed the victims fake identification documents and on occasions threatened them with arrest and pushed past them.

King was arrested in July after searching his home.

Investigating officer PC Jonathan Stephenson, of Brentwood CID, said: "King targeted our community's elderly and vulnerable for his own financial gain.

"We believe King followed some of his victims home after he saw them withdrawing cash in their towns. He is also an opportunist who targeted his victims due to their age.

"The crimes he carried out have and could continue to have an impact on the lives of the victims, with some even registered as disabled."

Man admits spying on children in changing rooms

A man from Billericay has admitted to hiding a camera in a key ring to watch children get changed at a swimming pool.

Robert Prior, 43, put the keys, which included a miniature camera, in the changing rooms to catch children as they got changed.

Despite doing this on two separate occasions in

2017 and 2018, in Billericay and London, the judge at Basildon Crown Court on November 14 released the sex offender on bail whilst sentencing is considered.

However, the judge did stress that the adjourning of sentence was not necessarily an indication of the punishment he might get.

Prior will return to court for sentence on January 6.

In total, Prior admitted six charges; three of making indecent images of children of category A, B and C, totalling 17 images, two counts of attempting to create indecent images in relation to the changing room cameras, and publishing an obscene article.

New affordable homes to rent and buy

New affordable homes in Billericay have been welcomed after the completion of a development in Roman Way.

In total 15 semi-detached houses have been built with a combination of two, three and four-bedroom homes.

In total, three of the homes will be available for affordable rent with six available for shared ownership and six for market sale.

Sempre Homes, the council's house building company, began work to build the new homes last summer.

Leader of Basildon Council, councillor Gavin Callaghan, attended the site recently to mark the completion of works alongside Sempra, Basildon Council and The Billericay School.

Cllr Callaghan said: "We are serious about delivering quality new homes for our residents and this development sets the bar very high. These houses are beautiful and will make excellent family homes. I am particularly proud of the way this scheme has enabled us to work closely with The Billericay School, which has supported the project and sent construction students over for site visits."



Photo credit: Basildon Council





Delivery driver gets into the festive spirit



A man from Billericay will be bringing some festive cheer to his customers this year while raising money for charity.

Stephen Richards, who is the local DPD driver for the town, will be dressing up as an elf between December 16 and 20 to raise money for a cause close to his heart.

He hopes to raise £1,000 for Shelley Simmonds, a Billericay mum who has done so much for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, as her son Fraser is bravely battling the muscle-wasting disease.

Stephen's idea to raise funds by turning himself into an elf for the week came after he dressed up for deliveries last year.

He told **VISION** Billericay Shenfield: "It started as a joke last year when I put a post on social media saying I'd dress as an elf for the day if I got 250 likes.

"It went down really well with everyone who I met so I thought why not do the same this year but for a local cause?"

"If you see me dressed up making deliveries please come and take a picture and share the page to raise awareness and help me meet my target."

To donate to Stephen's fundraising appeal visit www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/dpdelfbillericay

Finally a chance to make a splash

More than a year after closing and following constant delays Billericay swimming pool is set to reopen.

The pool, in Radford Crescent, was shut after an electrical fire with the repair work starting in July this year.

Now, after several setbacks, the pool will reopen on Saturday, November 30.

That first weekend will be open to the public with swimming sessions free for all, fun activities as well as guided tours on offer.

First Strokes Swim School, who run fun sessions in the pool, updated members.

They said: "The works to our Billericay pool are coming to an end.

"Lessons are due to commence shortly after; however, the Billericay team will be in touch with all current members.

"All bookings taken up to the end of December 1 will be entered into our amazing prize draw."

Jack Short, executive assistant at First Strokes added: "In partnership with the council, First Strokes Swim Schools have been working hard to get the Billericay Pool reopened. We are delighted to announce that the centre has been completely regenerated to serve the local community for many years to come."

Formal agreement signed as streets come out of the dark

Streetlights in Billericay are now back on all night Safer Essex County Council (ECC) and Basildon Council signed an agreement.

The deal was signed on November 8 with streetlights turned on across the borough in the few days that followed, including in Billericay.

Since February 2014, the streetlights have been turned off between midnight and 5am each night.

However, a committee from Basildon Council earlier this year proposed to cover ECC costs to have the lights turned back on.

Now councils have agreed all-night lighting throughout Basildon until March 2020, with the intention to agree in February 2020 to four years' further payments to keep the lights on all night until March 2024.



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V23



The Players Lounge has lots to offer for everyone

A state-of-the-art multi-complex venue with entertainment for everyone is now open in Billericay.

The Players Lounge, at Radford Way, has a 4G FIFA-approved indoor five-a-side football pitch, golf simulators, a Games Zone with the very latest X-BOX games, a custom built four-metre full HD LED screen showing the biggest events in sport, two bars and a restaurant.

Within the Players Lounge is The Arena, a 4G pitch which provides perfect playing conditions all year round.

The pitch is surrounded by unique three-metre-high acrylic rebound walls making perfect viewing of the playing area. In addition, a raised viewing platform, overseeing the entire pitch, is perfect for enjoying food

and drinks whilst spectating.

The Lounge Bar is home to the huge LED screen showing all the major Sky and BT sporting events.

Highlights include a top-quality sound system, private seating booths overlooking the whole bar area and great service and quality food.

The Bunker Bar is perfect for practicing your golf swing with a PGA professional expert and exclusive parties.

Players Lounge is open to everyone from 9am to 11pm other than Fridays and Saturdays when it is strictly over 21s 8pm to 2am.

All activities are available for parties and private hire. Packages available. Disabled/lift access.

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Children mark 400th anniversary of the Mayflower

The Reading Rooms in Billericay and four local schools have teamed up to mark the 400th anniversary of the Mayflower.

The Mayflower was an English ship that transported the first pilgrims from England to the New World, which refers to the USA and the Western Hemisphere, in 1620.

To mark the occasion the Reading Rooms committee have teamed up with four primary schools who will learn about the Mayflower before exhibiting their work.

The schools taking part include Buttsbury Junior School, Brightside Junior School, St Peter's Catholic Junior School and St John's School.

The pupils will be visiting the Reading Rooms and the Caster Museum during December, where they will be given information about the Mayflower and also a brief history of the Reading Rooms.

Then in March 2020 they will exhibit their project work at the Reading Rooms inviting people from the town to attend.



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BILLERICAY TOWN FC

LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY



Photo credit: Nicky Hayes Photography

Town knocked out of FA Cup

Billericay Town FC's heroic run to the FA Cup First Round ended in disappointment after they went down at Football League side Forest Green Rovers.

A 4-0 defeat was confirmed as a seven-minute salvo of goals from Matt Stevens, Joseph Mills, and Jack Aitchison just before the break were decisive. A deflected Liam Shephard effort completed the scoring for the home side in the second half.

In the days following the game, two players left the club as Moses Emmanuel was released and Sam Deering returned to full-time football.

The club said: "Everyone at Billericay Town would

like to thank both Sam and Moses for their efforts whilst with the club and wish them good luck for the future."

However, two players have joined the club.

Striker Deon Moore has joined on a month's loan from League One Bristol Rovers.

Deon started with Carshalton Athletic before joining Peterborough United, where he made four appearances before moving to Merstham and then Bristol Rovers.

Josh Urquhart has re-joined the club from Braintree Town.

Pitch damaged following club break-in

Police are investigating after a break-in at Billericay Football Club where the intruders caused significant damage to the pitch.

The break-in happened in the early hours of Saturday, November 2, and the damage led to the postponement of that afternoon's fixture against Weymouth.

Anyone who has any information regarding the identity of those responsible for this damage can pass their information on to the police by calling 101.

If you wish to report information anonymously you can do so by calling Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Christmas upgrades means train services will be affected

Passengers in Shenfield are being advised to check before they travel this Christmas as the railway is set to get upgraded.

The work, which includes upgrading the overhead wires between Shenfield and South Victoria, means buses will replace some services.

It follows a period of disruption already for passengers with work also taking place throughout December.

On Sunday mornings from 2.15am to 9am some services will be affected. This will take place on December 1, 8, 15 and 22.

There are no services on Christmas Day and Boxing Day, and a rail replacement service will operate between December 27 and January 1, 2020, with work planned to focus on the junction at Wickford.

In total Network Rail is replacing 128km of overhead wires with a new auto tension system that adapts to temperature changes.

This will improve the reliability of services for years to come for passengers on the Southend Victoria line.

Mark Budden, Network Rail's route director for Anglia, said: "Most of the railway network is open over Christmas, but some routes will be closed for engineering works so we can provide a safe and reliable railway for passengers."

"For those wishing to travel over the festive period, my advice is to plan ahead and check with their train operator or National Rail Enquiries, for the latest travel information."

Jamie Burles, Greater Anglia managing director said: "We're pleased that most of our services will be running between Christmas and New Year so that people can travel to visit loved ones, enjoy the sales and a day out."

"Since the railway tends to be much quieter over this period, Network Rail also use it to carry out essential upgrade work that will help to improve services for passengers."

Passengers are advised to check before they travel at www.nationalrail.co.uk or on the Greater Anglia website or app.

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Countdown to Christmas Fayre continues

LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD



Shenfield's annual Christmas Fayre is set to have something for all the family with thousands of people expected to attend.

Taking place on Sunday, December 8, between 12pm and 5pm the fayre will include 60 festive stalls, family attractions, Santa's Grotto, walk about acts and rides plus much more.

The fayre is set in and around Hutton Road and is a real community affair with lots of local business involvement and community groups.

Hutton Road, will be closed for the event with diversions in place.

One resident, Sally Hart, says it's the highlight of the Shenfield calendar.

She said: "I always take my kids and it is something for us which really signals the start of Christmas.

"It never disappoints even if the weather isn't very good."

Further delays to introduction of Crossrail

Shenfield commuters face an even longer wait before they can benefit from Crossrail as the project has been hit with further delays.

The railway project, which is Europe's largest infrastructure project, connects Shenfield in the east with Reading in the west.

It will provide a direct rail link from Shenfield through central London including to places like Canary Wharf, dramatically reducing journey times to the heart of the capital.

The route, known as the Elizabeth Line, was originally due to open December 2018 but a series of issues have pushed that back several times.

The Elizabeth Line is ready towards Shenfield in the east and Reading in the west but the tunnels

through the central section in London remain a challenge for Crossrail engineers.

Earlier this year the opening of the whole line was pushed back to between October 2020 and March 2021 but once again that date has been put in doubt.

It now looks like it will be 2021 at the earliest with no firm date known.

Crossrail's chief executive, Mark Wild, said: "We are doing everything we can to complete the Elizabeth Line as quickly as we can but there are no short-cuts to delivering this hugely complex railway. The Elizabeth Line must be completed to the highest safety and quality standards."

Have your say in future of fire service

Residents in Shenfield are being encouraged to have their say on the future priorities of Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS).

The consultation runs until Friday, December 13 and sets out the priorities for ECFRS by asking residents to agree or disagree on what they feel is a priority, as well as giving them the opportunity to share their opinions on the focus of the fire and rescue service.

The questions asked in the consultation include points around road safety, home visits, staff training and keeping vulnerable people safe.

All of the priorities prepare the service for a future with reductions in incidents, an increased focus on prevention and a commitment to become financially sustainable as reductions in funding continue.

Chief fire officer and chief executive, Jo Turton, said: "Our service recognises the voices of our residents are paramount in creating a transparent and effective fire and rescue service.

"This is the ideal opportunity for anyone who has ideas or views about their fire service to be involved in shaping our future."

To have your say on the options visit www.essex-fire.gov.uk/irmp



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Residents set to go to the polls

Residents in Brentwood and Ongar now know who could be the new MPs for their constituency as the 2019 General Election edges ever closer.

The polling stations open on Thursday, December 12 with new and familiar faces in the running to become the next Brentwood and Ongar MP which includes Shenfield.

Alex Burghart, from the Conservative Party appears to be the front runner having been the MP since 2017.

However, he faces competition from Oliver Durose (Labour), Paul Jeater (Green) and David Kendal (Liberal Democrat).

In 2017 Alex Burghart had a landslide victory having claimed 34,811 votes with 65.8 per cent of the votes going to the Conservative candidate.

Labour candidate, Gareth Barrett, came second although he got less than a third of the votes – 10,809 – that Alex did.

Conservative candidate Alex Burghart outlined his priorities for Brentwood and Ongar ahead of the 2019 General Election.

They include more money for schools, more

police officers, more money for NHS hospitals and GP services, breathing new life in the high street, helping older residents, supporting local charities and getting Brexit done.

Labour candidate Oliver Durose prioritised securing a green new deal, putting Brexit back to the people, building affordable housing, bringing key utilities under public ownership and protecting the NHS.

Paul Jeater, Green, will prioritise climate change. He said: "The Green Party has been speaking on this for many years. It's clear that whoever wins this election could hold power until 2025 – that's half the time we have left to tackle the climate emergency."

David Kendal, Liberal Democrat, is prioritising stooping Brexit.

He said: "Stopping Brexit and the Conservative government are two of the key issues at stake at this election.

"However, I am also passionate about getting better mental health services, addressing climate change and fighting for improvements to our rail and bus services."



Susie Horner

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LIFE AND TIMES OF Mr Kipling

“Through one of the marvels of modern science, I am enabled, this Christmas Day, to speak to all my peoples throughout the Empire.

“I take it as a good omen that wireless should have reached its present perfection at a time when the Empire has been linked in closer union. For it offers us immense possibilities to make that union closer still.”

These 62 words were spoken by King George V in 1932 in the first ever Christmas broadcast to the nation on the radio.

Historians see it as one of the great speeches of the twentieth century and it is catalogued in the British Library. The majestic words, which were widely acclaimed, were written by one of the greatest British authors, Rudyard Kipling.

He was born in Bombay, India, on December 30, 1865. In 1870, Kipling was sent to England to stay with a foster family in Southsea and then went to boarding school in Devon.

In 1882, he returned to India and worked as a journalist, writing poetry and fiction in his spare time. Books such as *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1888) gained success in England, and in 1889 Kipling went to live in London.

In 1892, Kipling married Caroline Balestier, and the couple moved to Vermont, USA, where they had their two daughters. In 1894 Kipling wrote his most famous book, *The Jungle Book*. In 1896, a quarrel with his wife's family prompted Kipling to move back to England and he settled with his own family in Sussex. His son John was born in 1897.



Other books followed, including *Kim* (1901) and *Puck of Pook's Hill* (1906). *The Just So Stories* (1902) were originally written for his daughter Josephine, who died of pneumonia aged six.

In 1902, Kipling bought a seventeenth-century house called Bateman's in East Sussex where he lived for the rest of his life. He travelled a lot, including repeated trips to South Africa in winter.

In 1915, his son, John, went missing in action while serving with the Irish Guards in the Battle of Loos during First World War. Kipling had difficulty accepting his son's death – having played a major role in getting the chronically short-sighted John accepted for military service – and subsequently

wrote an account of his regiment, *The Irish Guards in the Great War*. He also joined the Imperial War Graves Commission and selected the biblical phrase inscribed on many British war memorials: *Their Name Liveth For Evermore*.

Despite his personal friendship with King George, Kipling declined most of the many honours that were offered to him, including a knighthood, the Poet Laureateship and the Order of Merit, but in 1907 he accepted the Nobel Prize for Literature.

Kipling died on 18 January 1936 and is buried at Westminster Abbey.

HISTORY



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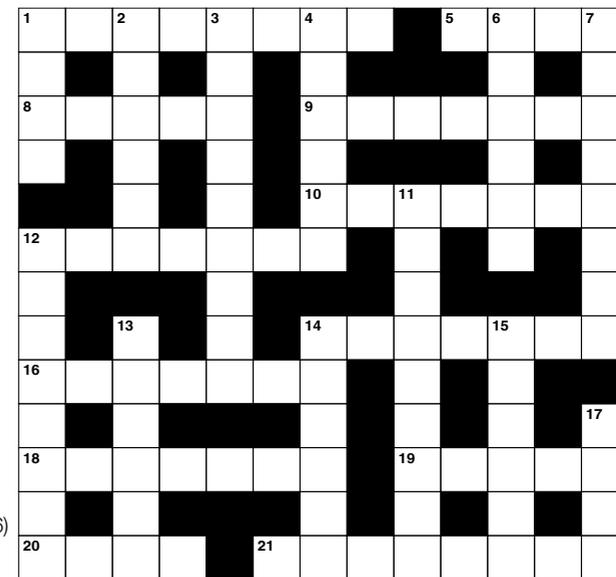
Answers can be found on the Contents Page 4

ACROSS

1. Very small African parrot (8)
5. Mire (anag) (4)
8. Criminal (5)
9. Beyonce ___: singer (7)
10. Strongly influencing later developments (7)
12. Enhance a photo (7)
14. Degree of eminence (7)
16. Boring (7)
18. Set up (7)
19. Gemstones (5)
20. Opposite of won (4)
21. Small falcons (8)

DOWN

1. Hoist (4)
2. Closely woven fabric (6)
3. Using both eyes (9)
4. Having a jaunty appearance (6)
6. Alyssa ___: US actress (6)
7. Determined (8)
11. Clumsy (9)
12. Fitting (8)
13. Love affairs (6)
14. Smear or blur (6)
15. Action of making use of something (6)
17. Poses a question (4)



DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Mastercard was known as Interbank from 1966 to 1969 and Master Charge from 1969 to 1979
- ▶ Porsche also makes tractors
- ▶ The first product to have a bar code included was a packet of Wrigley's gum
- ▶ Nokia was named after Nokianvirta, the Finnish river, where the business first began as a paper mill in the 1800s
- ▶ There are 22 stars in the Paramount logo, although the original has 24
- ▶ Hilton was the first international hotel chain
- ▶ The values on the Monopoly board game have been the same since 1935
- ▶ Cheerios cereal was originally called Cheerioats

SUDOKU

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

JOE WICKS

THE MAN FROM THE STICKS

*The man who built fitness fanaticism
from rural Surrey*

Joe Wicks is the marvellously built man-mountain whose drive towards health and well-being has inspired a nation of fitness fans, all keen to supplement their daily sweat by investing in sensible, supplementing food solutions.

In an era where we're being bombarded with influencers, energisers and "body-makers", the 34-year-old has carved for himself an attractive niche that relies on plain talking, sensible planning, ambitious targets and a small amount of humility thrown in along the way. For evidence of that, take his approach to running.

"We all know how important proper cardio is and running is arguably the best way of really getting your whole body primed to increase strength and fitness... but it doesn't mean you have to enjoy it.

"I regard myself as fit – I eat well, exercise a lot and I'm strong – but when I did the London Marathon I quickly learned the difference between power and endurance, and while I was quick enough over the first half of the course, it was a really painful and slow experience by the end... and that's okay, because we're all growing and learning together."

Wicks, whose popularity comes out of being one of the original Instagram fitness kings, has recently been throwing that (muscle-bound) frame behind breaking his own world record for the number of people he could get attending a single 30-minute High Intensity Interval Training (HIIT) class.

Having previously gathered 3,804 people in Hyde Park, Wicks ventured to Dubai to try to go one better, as well as embracing the health ambitions of the world's fastest-growing economies. During his time there, the fitness guru – who is a best-selling

author having made millions from his *Lean in 15* and *30 Minute Meals* books, among others – also conducted a workout session at a Dubai school, with 450 kids involved, and got his running shoes back on for a half-marathon challenge.

"For me it's always been about mixing up ideas and getting fitness going in different environments," he says. "When getting in shape falls into the same old routine, that's when it becomes dull, and that's what I want to steer people away from, because it's a killer for motivation."

Wicks, who recently created a series of YouTube videos offering "seven days of sweat" to encourage people to get fit and motivated before Christmas, got married over the summer to Rosie, and in the new year will welcome his second child into the world (baby Indie was born in September 2018).

And that world record attempt? Well, although huge numbers attended the Skydive Dubai field at Dubai Marina, the team fell agonisingly short of their target. Typically, Wicks sought out the positives from the experience.

"Failure is all part of building towards success in the future," he said. "I actually embrace those times when things don't go my way, because it makes me even more determined to find the right answer in future, and whether that's not managing to bench press as much as I'd like, or not hitting a treadmill PB or simply giving in to a treat occasionally, moving forward is always about failing in the past, so we get up the next day and go for it all over again."

Photo credit: Ken McKay/ITV/Shutterstock



Should you buy a SLOW COOKER?

Owning a slow cooker is now nearly as common as owning a toaster or a kettle, with many praising the virtues of this time-saving kitchen appliance.

And what better time to invest in a slow cooker than in winter when the nights are cold and your belly screams for foods that are warm and comforting, but is this cooking device right for you?

How does a slow cooker work?

A slow cooker works by cooking food for long periods of time at a low temperature. Heat is created in the base of the appliance and is then transferred up the sides of the cooker to slowly heat your food. Most slow cookers have the option of cooking at either a low or a high temperature, depending on how long you have to create your meal.

What are the benefits of a slow cooker?

- ✓ You are highly unlikely to burn your food.
- ✓ You can use cheaper cuts of meat.

- ✓ It frees up your oven or hob for other cooking.
- ✓ Minimal washing-up.
- ✓ It uses less energy than a standard oven.
- ✓ It is portable, convenient and saves time.

What are the downsides to using a slow cooker?

- ✗ Diluted flavours owing to condensation can lead to bland food.
- ✗ Not all recipes are suitable for slow cooking – such as meat that needs browning.
- ✗ Fresh spices and herbs can be overpowering in the slow cooker, so always use less than the recommended amount.
- ✗ It can be inflexible.
- ✗ No quick-fix meals.
- ✗ Tinned and even frozen veg does not work as well in a slow cooker – fresh produce is best.

Slow cookers are good for curries, soups, stews, casseroles, sauces and even mulled wine.

Best slow cooker brands: Crock-Pot Slow Cooker, Sage by Heston Blumenthal Fast Slow Pro Pressure/Slow Cooker, Russell Hobbs Chalkboard Slow Cooker 3.5L.



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PLANT OF THE MONTH:

Sarcococca *confusa*

Sarcococca confusa, also known as Christmas box, is an evergreen shrub that bears small white flowers. Somewhat surprisingly, given its heavenly honey-scented blooms, it is one of the least popular evergreens available, but don't let that stop you from choosing this obliging plant for your garden.

Where to grow Sarcococca confusa

Sarcococca confusa is a hardy plant that is very easy to grow. It prefers a relatively shady spot but can still thrive in full sun as long as the soil is kept damp.

Due to its sweet fragrance, it is advised to grow this plant close to your house where you can enjoy the full force of its aroma in flower borders, flower beds or containers.

How to plant Sarcococca confusa

You can plant this tough shrub at most times of the year, except when the ground is frozen solid, waterlogged or extremely dry, but if you want to perk up your garden this winter, then this is the plant for you.

Simply plant the shrub in moist, well-drained soil, water well and apply a granular general feed around the plant. It will also benefit from a layer of garden compost or bark chippings around the roots.

How to care for Sarcococca confusa

In early spring, lightly trim or prune back the shoots of your shrub and then apply another layer of compost around the base of the plant. In its first year, water regularly.

What other plants complement Sarcococca confusa?

As this shrub is lush and green all year round, with flowers between December and March, it is suited to plants that only peak at certain times of the year such as deciduous plants. It also complements taller shrubs such as hydrangeas.



GARDENING



Berry nice INDEED

Warming those winter garden vistas with some bursts of festive colour

We all know the colours and the coldness of winter when it comes to gardening. Many of us regard it as a season reserved only for planning the dawning of spring, when luscious life can return to our outside spaces.

And yet, winter can be about much more than greens, browns and greys where gardens are concerned. Certainly in the use of berries, your outside space can quickly adopt all the sprigs and spray of summer. With that in mind, then, here are some plants that will help keep things colourful:

SORBUS

In white, pink, yellow, red, blue and quite the most stunning copper tones, the berries from this deciduous tree will bring breathless colour to even the darkest corner.

HOLLY

A festive favourite, holly combines a burning red berry with that intensely detailed, beautifully curated leaf, with a combination of greens that offsets its radiant bedfellow with a flourish of frosty finesse.

VIBURNUM TINUS

In its prime between the months of December and April, just when you think the golden pink buds of this characterful plant can't offer anything more, the ends burst open, offering a spray of white flowers. One of the first risers for spring's sumptuous season of colour, the Viburnum Tinus will soar in prominence just as the temperatures begin to do likewise.

CALLICARPA

This shrub has purple, jewel-like berries that look as if they've come straight from a safe deposit box in Hatton Garden. An intensely rich shade, the plant goes into overdrive in autumn and winter, offering colour to even the gloomiest garden.

And if the beauty of the winter rebels isn't a pleasure enough to see, the range of birds they will attract to your garden will only serve to delight you further.



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PETS

FESTIVE FOOD

no-nos for your pets

Christmas is a time to overindulge as a family, and for animal lovers, that extends to their pets.

Now you may think you are being kind in giving your pet their very own Christmas dinner, but there are certain festive foods that they should not be eating.

fatty for their digestive system and the bones can pose a choking hazard.

Snacks & Sweet Treats

❌ MINCE PIES

These pastry-encrusted traditional Christmas treats include raisins, currants and sultanas, all of which can be fatal to dogs.

❌ NUTS

Certain nuts can be toxic to animals, so it is best to avoid giving any varieties to your pets just in case they have a bad reaction.

❌ CHOCOLATE

Chocolate can be deadly to your pets so it should be kept out of reach at all times. Don't forget about tree chocolates.

The Main Event

❌ TURKEY SKIN & BONES

Although a few slices of turkey meat will not harm your pet, the skin of the bird is too

❌ PIGS IN BLANKETS

So delicious, and your dog would probably think so too, but these Christmas dinner accompaniments are simply too fatty and salty for your pet.

❌ STUFFING & GRAVY

Although not toxic to pets, both of these are high in salt and fat as well as containing several herbs and spices that may irritate your pet's stomach.

Puddings

❌ CHRISTMAS PUDDING AND CHRISTMAS CAKE

Just like mince pies, these both contain raisins, sultanas and currants that can be fatal to your pets.

❌ ICE CREAM AND CREAM

Cats and dogs both find it difficult to break down lactose which is found in both of the above tasty desserts; therefore, it is advised not to give them any. Even lactose-free ice cream can be problematic.





HIIT PILATES



Want to look and feel 20 years younger?
HIIT Pilates could be the workout for you.

WHAT IS HIIT PILATES?

HIIT stands for High Intensity Interval Training, which involves short periods of intense anaerobic exercises with very short amount of rest periods. You can expect lots of leg-dominant exercises such as jumping lunges, squat jumps and burpees. HIIT Pilates, on the other hand, focuses on core strength, which is so important in standard Pilates, as well as getting your heart rate up.

CAN ANYONE TRY IT?

Yes, unlike with standard HIIT, this combination workout puts less pressure on your joints and instead focuses on ensuring you engage all of your muscles, resulting in a more effective but less strenuous workout. That being said, it is still a full body training session that will challenge your body.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

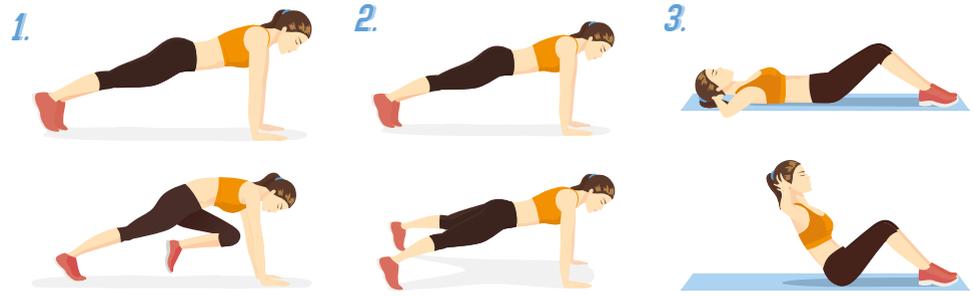
- > Burns more fat than with regular cardio
- > Faster results
- > Strengthens your core muscles

- > Keeps your heart healthy
- > You will lose weight, not muscle
- > You will feel stronger, leaner and more flexible
- > Suitable for all ages and fitness levels

WHAT TYPES OF EXERCISES CAN I DO?

- 1. Mountain Climbers:** Start in the plank position, pull one knee in towards your hands, then extend back to the plank. Repeat with the other knee.
- 2. Plank Jacks:** Start in the plank position, holding your abs tight. Jump your feet outwards into a 'V' position and immediately back to your starting position.
- 3. Triple Crunchers:** Lie down with your feet flat and your knees bent. Support your head with your hands, elbows out wide, and then lift your shoulders off the floor in three gradual movements until you are sitting upright. Keep your abs tight.

Carry out all of the above for one minute, rest for one minute and repeat twice more.



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ELEMIS





Goodnight sweetheart

Getting adequate shut-eye is more important than any vitamin, mineral, food or workout, so why are we so blasé about sleep?

Eat sensibly, rehydrate, breathe in clean air – we take all these for granted as being good for our health. And yet the thing that, on average, will occupy one-third of our lives – sleep – is messed about with, interrupted and at times completely abandoned.

There is nothing more natural than sleep, and an interrupted pattern of rest can be linked to immune system weakness, body cell deterioration, depression and anxiety, not to mention an inability to concentrate.

Yet the answer isn't simply to go to bed earlier – you'll need to consider what's around you. Numerous studies have shown that smartphones and device usage is on the increase, and it's the "blue light" emissions from these that can delay the release of sleep-inducing melatonin, as well as resetting the body's internal clock (circadian rhythm).

Moving away from screens earlier, therefore, seems the best way to maximise the efficiency of sleep, but remember as well the need to moderate room temperature, dim lighting and remove excess noise within or around your bedroom.

Sure enough, most of us can reel off a good number of the benefits of sleep – sharpness, mood enhancement, lowering of blood pressure, better immunity, improved memory, stress reduction and even maintaining of body weight – so it's not as if we don't know it's good for us.

Doctors recommend a trial week of "regular as clockwork" bedtimes, with long rests and the adoption of healthy habits. They then invite people to see if they feel improved in all those physical and psychological aspects. If the answer is yes, it goes to show why getting your head down may be the best thing you can do, not just for your health and well-being, but for your sanity too.

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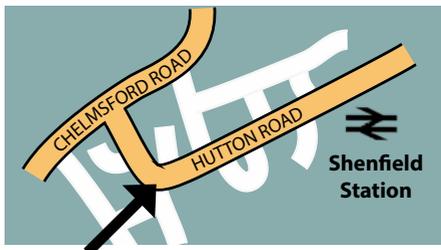


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TUMBLE DRYER

DON'TS

How did we ever exist without the humble tumble dryer? It's quick, efficient and, most importantly, not dependent on the unpredictable British weather. But it can cause chaos to your clothes if not used correctly.

1. Bras

The main job of a bra is to provide support, but by tumble drying this item you risk the elastic becoming stretched and out of shape.

2. Leather items

Leather, suede and faux leather should always be air-dried as heat can cause these materials to crack or become distorted.

3. Delicate fabrics

Silk, lace and sheer net items should never be tumble dried as the high temperature will set in wrinkles.

4. Gym wear

Activewear is made from man-made fibres which are designed to keep you cool and supported, but they will not keep their shape in the dryer.

5. Athletic shoes

Shoes that are made from leather, canvas or the latest high-tech performance fabrics should not be tumble dried as the heat can cause the soles to fall off.

6. Knitted jumpers/cardigans

Tumble drying knitwear can cause the items to lose their shape by causing the fabric to shrink or stretch.

7. Fur items

Real fur can crack in the dryer, whereas faux fur can melt or become tangled.

8. Swimwear

Costumes, bikinis and swim shorts should be washed or rinsed after each use, but avoid tumble drying as this can ruin the fabric.

9. Ugg boots

Although super cosy, Ugg boots are not the best footwear to get caught in the rain in, and when they do get wet it can be tempting to throw them in the dryer. Don't. Sheepskin will shrink in the heat.

10. Tights/stockings

Even a few minutes in the tumble dryer can cause irreversible damage to hosiery: think tangles, knots and even runs.

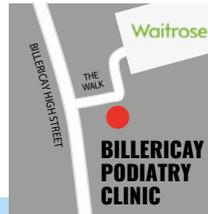


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BEAUTY

FACING THE DAY

Tis the season of late-night shopping and dazzling festive soirees, but every night staying up late looking fabulous is followed by a gruelling early morning where you look and feel tired. Fortunately, there is plenty you can do (or NOT do) in order to appear as fresh as a winter morning.

THE DOS

✓ DO take your daily vitamins. Sleep is the best way to replenish body and mind, but on nights when you know you're not going to get enough shut-eye, slathering on a moisturiser rich in potent vitamin C can be the next best thing.

✓ DO use a shade lighter. It might seem counterintuitive to highlight your shadows, but using a concealer one tone lighter on your under-eye area is actually a great way to brighten your eyes, giving the impression of vitality.

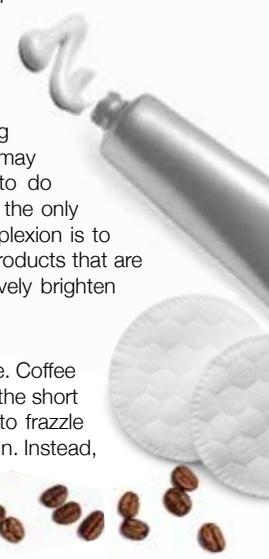
✓ DO be generous with mascara. Want to look bright eyed and bushy tailed? Then open up those peepers with lashings of mascara.

THE DON'TS

✗ DON'T overdo it. Tempting though it might be to cover up your evening antics with make-up, you might find yourself looking even more fatigued. Youthful skin glows, so stick to products that are light and illuminating, rather than heavy, powdery ones that are prone to settling in skin creases.

✗ DON'T skip your cleansing routine. Washing your face may be the last thing you want to do on a dark, cold morning, but the only way to rejuvenate a dull complexion is to remove the dead cells. Use products that are gentle but powerful to effectively brighten the skin.

✗ DON'T load up on caffeine. Coffee might make you feel better in the short term, but too much is going to frazzle your mind and dry out your skin. Instead, drink plenty of water.





FANCY *fabulous* FEET?

Your feet take you everywhere. They support your weight all day long yet often they are squished and squeezed into stylish but undeniably ill-fitting footwear.

It is high time we took more care of our tootsies.

Always dry your feet properly after bathing

How often do you jump out of the bath and fail to adequately dry your feet? Probably often, but it is extremely important that you do this otherwise you could develop a fungal infection such as athlete's foot.

TOP TIP: Always ensure you dry thoroughly between your toes.

Exfoliate and moisturise your feet daily

This may seem excessive, but it will only take a matter of minutes and can work wonders on the appearance and well-being of your feet. Make sure you apply the scrub when your feet are damp and focus on any areas of hard or cracked skin. Once exfoliation is complete, rinse and then apply a thick moisturiser.

TOP TIP: Wear socks overnight so that your moisturiser doesn't dry out.

Trim your nails regularly

Nails that grow too long are more prone to infections than ones that are well looked after. It is advised to use a nail clipper to trim your toenails and then use a nail file to remove any sharp edges.

TOP TIP: Cut your nails after a bath or shower as this is when they are at their softest.

Wear appropriate footwear

When choosing a pair of shoes, it can be tempting to let your heart rule your head, but that is not a good idea. Ill-fitting shoes can result in nasty afflictions such as ingrown toenails or bunions.

Instead, look for shoes that support your feet, feel comfortable and don't rub.

TOP TIP: If you want height, choose wedges over high heels.

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ARE WE THERE YET?

HOW TO OCCUPY YOUR KIDS ON THOSE LONG CAR JOURNEYS OVER CHRISTMAS

What is the most dreaded phrase that children typically say on long car journeys? Yes, you guessed it, it's "Are we nearly there yet?"

This innocuous-sounding question is often uttered within minutes of leaving the house and turns even the most patient parent into a bad-tempered tyrant.

Check out our free car games and eliminate boredom for good.

1. TRAVEL BINGO

Think of 5 or 10 things to find that can be seen from your car window. Create a bingo card with these items listed and then simply let your kids find them and cross off throughout your journey.

2. I'M GOING ON A PICNIC

This is a great memory game for children aged 5 upwards and can have as many players as you like. The first player says "I'm going on a picnic and I'm bringing...", followed by something that begins

with A. The second player repeats what the first player said and then adds something beginning with B, and so on.

3. 20 QUESTIONS

An oldie but a goodie, this guessing game can be enjoyed by children of all ages. Player one thinks of a person, place or object. Then the remaining players take turns to ask questions which must be answered with only yes or no. After each answer the questioner may have a guess.

4. WHO CAN STAY QUIETEST THE LONGEST?

If you really can't take any more of your children complaining and bickering, this is the game to turn to. Engage their competitiveness and enjoy five or hopefully more minutes of blissful silence.

5. ELECTRONIC DEVICES

If all else fails, you know you can always turn to the iPads and smartphones for a quick boredom fixer.



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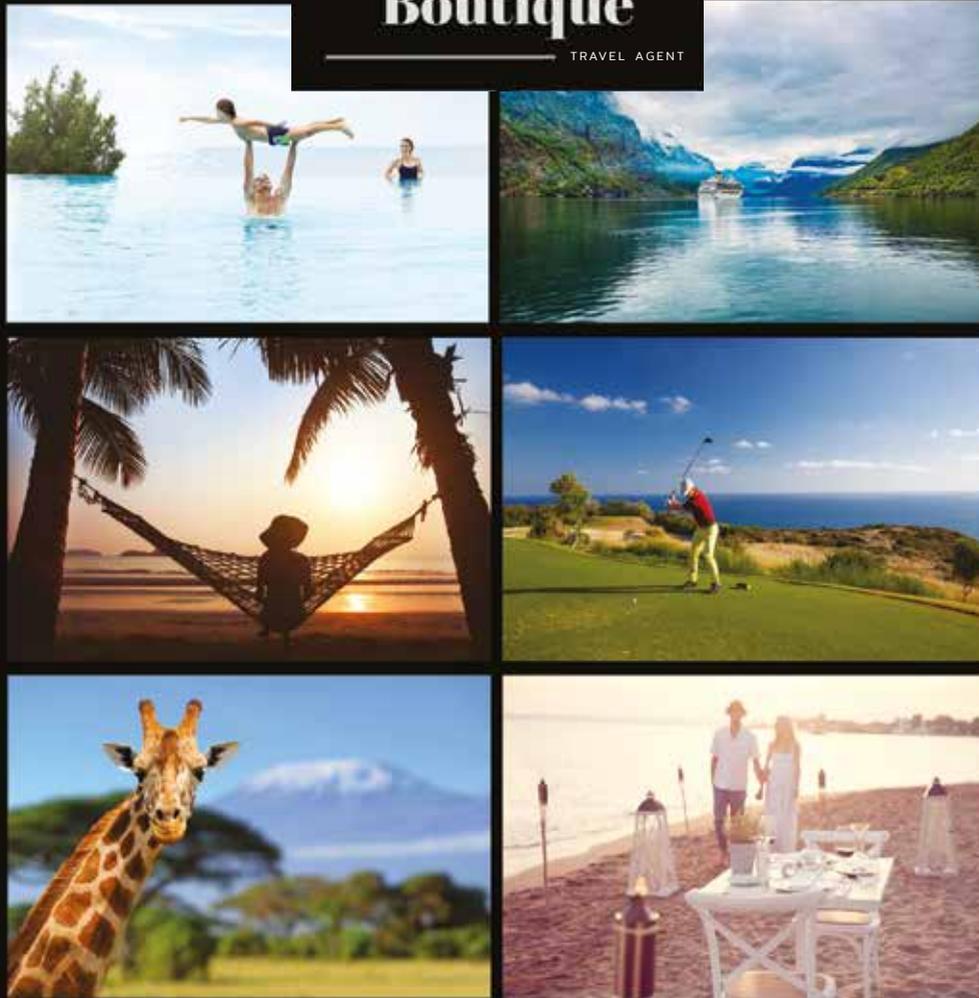
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TRAVEL

Things to consider for a NEW YEAR BREAK on a budget

Whether you fancy some winter sun or a romantic city break, booking a last-minute New Year break on a budget can be a challenge, to say the least.

But fear not – it can be done.

Choose a less-popular destination

Certain areas of the globe are known for their New Year's Eve party extravaganzas – think New York, Las Vegas and Sydney – but if you don't want to be paying off your New Year break for the next 12 months, consider going to a less-popular destination such as Budapest or Prague.

Consider going en masse

If you have a large group of friends who enjoy going away together, look into the option of renting a house rather than staying in a hotel. For those who don't have their heart set on going abroad, there are some great deals to be had on shared

accommodation in the UK – you could even rent out a castle.

Take the risk of booking last minute

Most people like to have their New Year's Eve plans set in stone at least a few weeks before the big event, if not more, but one way of finding a super-cheap deal is to wait until the very last minute. Yes, this is risky, and you may not have a lot of choice in terms of your destination, but if you can't be spontaneous on New Year's, when can you be?

Compare prices

You may think it would be cheaper to book a budget package deal with flights, accommodation and transfers included, but that is not always the case. It is advisable to shop around to get the best deals.





THREE *extravagant edible* CHRISTMAS GIFTS

Who doesn't like something a little bit naughty at Christmas, whether that be your favourite festive tippie or a boozy chocolate liqueur? And what could be better than receiving one of your preferred indulgences as a gift? So, why not create a personalised edible treat for a loved one this festive season?

CLEMENTINE CHRISTMAS GIN

You will need:
One bottle of London Dry Gin • 4-5 clementines • 200g caster sugar • 1 piece of fresh ginger • 2 star anise

How to make:
Slice the fruit into segments (skins attached) • Add to a sterilised jar with the other ingredients • Seal and shake • Leave in a cool spot for two weeks • Shake occasionally to infuse the flavours further • After two weeks, strain your liqueur • Pour into an attractive bottle and finish with a ribbon



CRANBERRY & CHILLI JAM

You will need:
2 red onions • 4 cloves of garlic • 3-4 fresh red chillies • 500g cranberries • 150g sugar • 40ml red wine vinegar

How to make:
Peel and finely chop the onions and garlic • Deseed and slice the chillies • Sweat the above in a large pan for 10 minutes • Add cranberries, vinegar, sugar and 50ml water • Simmer for 20 minutes • Mash the mixture slightly and cook for a further 15 minutes • Season to taste • Add to sterilised jars

CHRISTMAS BOOZY TRUFFLES

You will need:
300g quality dark chocolate pieces • 300ml double cream • 50g unsalted butter • Your preferred liqueur – Grand Marnier, coconut rum, whiskey • Your chosen coating

How to make:
Gently heat cream and butter in a saucepan • Remove from heat and add chocolate • Stir until you have a smooth mixture • Add your chosen liqueur • Chill for a minimum of four hours • Shape your truffles using a melon baller and place on greaseproof paper • Immediately coat your truffles • Store in the fridge in an airtight container






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MOTORING

Fuelling THE THEORY

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IS PREMIUM FUEL REALLY WORTH THE EXTRA INVESTMENT?

We've all seen those suffixes at the petrol station – "Super", "V-Power", "Premium", "Nitro+", or "Ultimate" – luring you to the more expensive pump as you prepare to dole out anything up to £100 to fill up your tank.

For some of us, whether it's petrol or diesel, simply filling up is enough of a financial chore, without wanting to contemplate voluntarily spending more on jazzed-up fuel. For others, premium denotes performance and longevity, but does the added investment pay back? In the long term, the answer is, surprisingly... yes; but don't bother if you're driving a Nissan Micra.

In short, if you own a high-spec vehicle, then filling up from the premium pump could be a sound move. The fuel's higher-octane rating means it works better with engines of a higher compression, so that leads to increased performance and more-efficient maintenance of your system.

The downside is cost – on average, performance fuel will cost you around 10p per litre more. Spin that out over the course of a year's motoring and you've added on a fair whack to your road bills, but on the plus side your car will be running more efficiently, and for longer. There's also the prevention of "engine knock" to consider – that's where unburned fuel pre-ignites in a vehicle's engine, damaging interior components.

But all this largely only applies to premium vehicles, where higher-octane motors mean higher-octane fuel. For what you might describe as "everyday cars", go for the cheaper option. Your little run-around will have a standard octane rating of 95, meaning that the electronics are configured so that the vehicle will run in a satisfactory way on the regular fuel.

Put another way, there's a good chance upgrading your fuel will make little noticeable difference... except to your wallet.

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How to clear festive debt

According to a national debt charity, nearly eight million people in the UK expect to fall behind in their finances in January after overspending on Christmas.

1. Don't bury your head in the sand

If you are serious about clearing your debt, you need to know exactly what you are dealing with.

2. Look at areas of spending you can cut back on

Whether that be your daily shop-bought coffee or cancelling your gym membership.

3. Switch providers

An ideal time to evaluate all direct debits and see if you can save money by switching providers.

4. Look for 0% balance transfer deals

If you have overspent on your credit cards, now is the time to switch to a 0% balance transfer deal.

5. Set a realistic budget

Once you have paid all your bills, set a budget for any disposable income and utilise the rest to pay off your debts.

6. Pay off your most expensive credit card first

There is no point paying equal amounts off all of your credit cards if one has a much higher interest rate than the rest.

7. Pay more than the minimum amount

Paying back the minimum amount on your cards means you will likely only be paying off interest, not actual debt.

8. Sell any unwanted gifts or home stuff

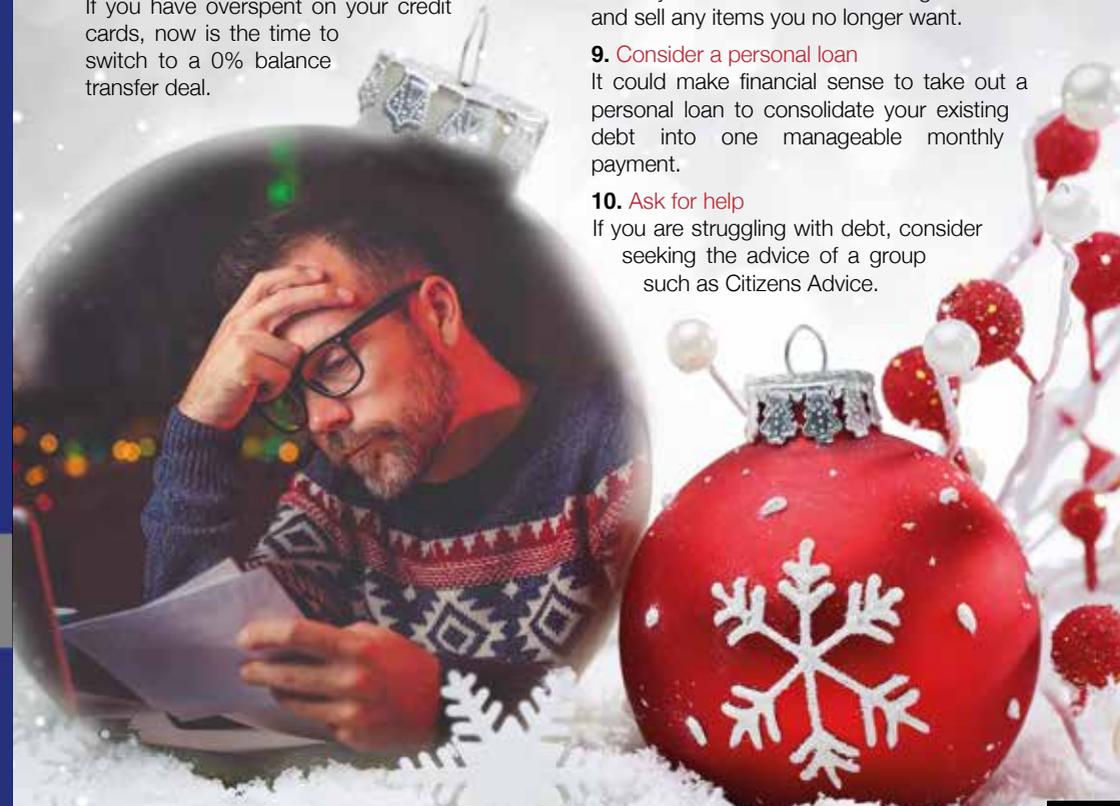
January is the ideal time to have a good clear-out and sell any items you no longer want.

9. Consider a personal loan

It could make financial sense to take out a personal loan to consolidate your existing debt into one manageable monthly payment.

10. Ask for help

If you are struggling with debt, consider seeking the advice of a group such as Citizens Advice.



ON YOUR RADAR – KEY PERSONAL FINANCE TIPS

Taking the time to tune in to a few key pointers can really benefit your finances, helping you plan and manage them effectively.

SAVE INTO YOUR ISA

The ISA allowance for 2019-20 is £20,000. Don't miss this opportunity to save or invest tax-efficiently. We can help you choose the right ISA for your needs.

KEEP TABS ON YOUR PENSIONS

If you've moved jobs a few times, it's likely you've paid into several pensions. It's important to know what your entitlements are; we can advise you whether you'd be better off consolidating them.

YOUR STATE PENSION AGE AND ENTITLEMENT

If you're not sure when you'll receive yours, you can check the date and get a forecast of the amount you'll receive on the government's website: <https://www.gov.uk/check-state-pension>

YOUR HOME CONTENTS POLICY – DON'T RISK BEING UNDERINSURED

If you don't insure your possessions for the right amount and you make a claim, you could find your

insurance company reduce your payout. It may be time to increase your sum insured in line with the value of your contents.

YOUR MORTGAGE RATE OF INTEREST

With the monthly mortgage repayment often a family's largest outgoing, it's important to review your mortgage, as there may be a better deal to be had by remortgaging, especially if you're currently paying interest at your lender's standard variable rate.

As part of the service at HCR, we take the time to understand our client's unique planning needs and circumstances, so that we can provide you with the most suitable solutions in the most cost-effective way. For a free review of your current financial situation, please contact Karyn Vogel on 01277 654153.

The value of investments can go down as well as up and you may not get back the full amount you invested. The past is not a guide to future performance and past performance may not necessarily be repeated.

As a mortgage is secured against your home or property, it could be repossessed if you do not keep up mortgage repayments.



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SPORT

RACING LINE

LEWIS HAMILTON WINS SIXTH WORLD TITLE TO CLOSE IN ON MICHAEL SCHUMACHER'S RECORD

He may have lost "the battle" in failing to fight off a late rally by his Mercedes-Benz team-mate Valtteri Bottas, but Lewis Hamilton won the war by finishing second to secure his sixth world Formula One championship title in Texas at the start of November.

The Stevenage-born driver needed to be within seven places of the Finn to clinch the drivers' title, and even though he started fifth on the grid, Hamilton came within four laps of sealing the championship win with a race victory.

But in the end, Bottas' DRS overtake was irrelevant, such as the Briton's advantage on the season leaderboard. This latest crown took him past Juan Manuel Fangio's five titles and within one of Schumacher's tally.

The 2019 renewal of the championship has had it all – dull and one-sided races, intriguing battles and unexpected results. Hamilton, by his own admission, won the "boring races", often leading from the first corner to the chequered flag.

Germany's Hockenheim circuit saw his only uncharacteristic mistake, as he exited with 11 laps remaining in treacherous track conditions. At the time he

commented that it was his "worst day at the office". Winning more than half of the 19 races is one big reason why Hamilton has topped the table for the third straight season, not to mention the fifth time in six years, and yet there are still two immediate records in the racer's sights.

He currently equals his own highest seasonal points total of 408, so any scoring finish in either of the last two races will see him surpass that. In addition, his 10 GP wins this season leave him just one short of his previous best.

The sign of a true champ is one who keeps on winning despite his success, and Hamilton this season has once again embodied that unrelenting spirit.

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WHAT'S ON

in your area

Billericay Christmas Market
Billericay High Street, Billericay,
CM12 9AS
December 1, 11am – 5pm



Billericay Mayflower Rotary have, once again, organised the town's much anticipated annual Christmas Market.

Kicking off at 11am with Santa's Parade, visitors can look forward to many of the usual attractions including the children's fun fair, donkey rides, Punch and Judy, Santa's Grotto and a variety of stalls.

Poplars Magical Christmas Market
Hutton Poplars Hall, Poplar Drive, Shenfield,
CM13 1YU
December 7, 12pm – 4pm

This event will feature a huge range of stalls for a truly magical shopping experience.

There will also be a make up artist doing glitter face paint and a hair stylist.

With a range of hot drinks and delicious cakes, why not pop down?

Free entry.

Relaxation and Wellbeing Evening
Shenfield Parish Hall, 60 Hutton Road,
Brentwood, CM15 8LB
December 9, 7.30pm

Relax, sit comfortably and learn techniques to reduce stress, increase happiness, enhance focus and achieve calmness. This will be followed by a 15-minute de-stress treatment.

It is free entry to this event, but donations are welcome. For further information, contact Amanta on amantag@icloud.com or Carolina on 07969 888330.

Christmas Carol Concert
The Billericay Constitutional Club, 1A High Street, Billericay, CM12 9BE
December 13, 6pm – 11.30pm

A performance of Christmas carols as well as the Christmas draw.

Food is being served from 6pm to 8pm with the carols from 8pm.

Please visit www.billericayconclub.co.uk for more information.

Charity Lunch
Billericay Methodist Church, Western Road, Billericay, CM12 9DT
December 14, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

A snack lunch and drink for £4.50. The proceeds this month are going to St Luke's Hospice.

For more details, call 01277 622297.

Coffee with the Cops
Costa Coffee, 76 High Street, Billericay, CM12 9BT
December 16, 2pm – 3pm

Your chance to get to know your local community policing team over a coffee.

Ask questions, voice your concerns and tell them how they can help you.



Ed Sheeran Tribute
REIDS Bar, 66-68 Laindon Road, Billericay, CM12 9LD
December 19, 7pm – 11pm

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