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FREE

SKY BROWN

*GB's youngest summer
Olympian in 50 years*

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February 2020

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Editor's notes...



Nik Allen, Editor

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

I make little secret of my Everton FC roots, or of the regular bouts of disappointment supporting them provokes. But even by their standards, losing

to a severely weakened Liverpool side – which featured a 16-year-old, two other teenagers, a debutant who hadn't kicked a ball for two months and, in total, eight players aged 24 or under – in the FA Cup third round on January 5, was a new low.

In the aftermath, I considered what I had seen from one of the teams – determination, passion and optimism. I had to applaud that application, and realised they are the elements that should steer all of us forward this year.

As a person and as a publisher, I've always been driven and optimistic, and I love seeing that both in my team here at **VISION** and when I'm out in the local community. That's what we're all about and, while I care deeply about my football team, I need to be quick to remind myself that real life exists not on a 110x75-yard piece of grass.

Instead, it's on the street corners, at the parks, in the halls and clubs, and in every friendly conversation between locals.

While it pains me to say it, it's 100 per cent true that the real passion to keep moving forward and to flourish as a community is exactly that shown by those Liverpool youngsters.

Enjoy reading the February edition,

Nik

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DOWN: 1. ANACHRONISTIC, 2. TOTEM, 4. BUDGIE, 5. UNEXPECTEDLY, 6. AVERAGE, 7. EXTRAVALGANTLY, 8. QUINTESSENCE, 14. PREPARE, 16. ACIDIC, 18. TIMID

SKY IS THE LIMIT

Sky Brown, at 11 years of age, has been picked for the GB Skateboarding team, making her the youngest summer Olympian in 50 years. We look at what she has achieved thus far, and what this sensational youngster might accomplish going forward.

Sky was born in Japan – Miyazaki to be exact, on the south-eastern coast – to a British father and a Japanese mother. The pre-teen prodigy still officially resides in south-east Asia but spends the majority of her time in the United States.

Global sports giant Nike made her its youngest-ever acquisition in February 2019, and she has appeared regularly in ad campaigns with iconic female athletes, including fellow Briton Dina Asher-Smith, American artistic gymnast Simone Biles and South African middle-distance runner Caster Semenya.

At the age of eight, Sky became the youngest female to compete in the Vans US Open Pro Series. Although failing to place in the medals, she did finish higher than a number of competitors 20 years her senior.

This year, Sky clinched gold at Simple Session, a senior women's competition in Estonia's capital of Tallinn, and on a park course specifically designed for male competitors typically twice her size. It is this increased success in competition, matched with a squeaky clean image and the potential of youth, that has elevated her into superstar territory, and she is expected to become a multimillionaire long before she is even able to buy an alcoholic drink.

Dancing is another of Sky's talents and she was the winning celebrity on the US reality TV show *Dancing with the Stars: Juniors* in 2018.

While experts agree Sky's natural talent for skateboarding is without question, it was feared she may not be ready to compete at Olympic level owing to a lack of speed or power from her slight frame.

However, the decision by the British Olympic Association to invite her to compete for them – a significant 'win' given Japan's interest in her and the fact that the 2020 event is being held in Tokyo – has cemented the old adage, 'if you're good enough, you're old enough'.

And yet some commentators have queried the extent to which someone so young is able to cope with the pressure not just of high-level competition, but also of the media glare that will surely confront such a young talent. In Sky's defence, she is a youngster who exudes confidence. She practises surfing, does karate, jujitsu, dancing and singing, thrives on activity and equips herself as a modern, fearless youngster too young to have experienced the pressures that often only begin to surface in the teenage years.

"I just go about things in the way that feels natural," she says. "I am enjoying myself too much to feel the pressure and I'm keen to keep pushing forward with these opportunities that I have."

Those opportunities are probably somewhat wider than she herself appreciates. Competitive events she can handle, and media commitments are, it seems, a doddle. Yet stepping up as a cultural icon across social media, whose movements and actions are going to be lapped up by an adorning fan base spread all around the world... Sky Brown is going to have a busy few years ahead.



“I AM ENJOYING MYSELF
TOO MUCH TO
FEEL THE PRESSURE”

29
FEBRUARY

LEAP OF FAITH

This year is a leap year, with 366 days instead of 365, the extra day falling on February 29.

The extra day is traditionally when women can turn the tables and propose marriage. It also means people born on February 29 can actually celebrate their birthday on the proper day.

Here are six facts about leap year:

1. The leap year's extra day is vital because a complete orbit around the sun takes slightly longer than 365 days – five hours, 48 minutes and 46 seconds longer, to be exact.

At one time, people observed a 355-day calendar with an extra 22-day month every two years. But in 45bc Julius Caesar ordered his astronomer, Sosigenes, to simplify things.

Sosigenes opted for the 365-day year with an extra day every four years to use up the extra hours. The extra day is added to February because it used to be the last month of the Roman calendar.

The system was then fine-tuned by Pope Gregory XIII. He coined the term leap year.

2. The tradition of women proposing on leap day is thought to date back to fifth-century Ireland when St Brigid complained to St Patrick that women had to wait too long for suitors to propose.

He then gave women a single day in a leap year to pop the question – the last day of the shortest month. Legend has it that Brigid dropped to a knee and proposed to Patrick that instant, but he refused, kissing her on the cheek and offering a silk gown to soften the blow.

3. Others believe the tradition originates from Scotland when Queen Margaret, then aged just five, declared in 1288 that a woman could propose to any man she liked on February 29.

She ruled that men who refused the proposal would need to pay a fine in the form of a kiss, a silk dress, a pair of gloves or one pound. To give suitors fair warning – and possibly a chance to escape – a woman was required to wear breeches or a scarlet petticoat on the day of the proposal.

4. In Denmark, a man refusing a woman's leap-day proposal must give her 12 pairs of gloves, while in Finland it's fabric for a skirt.

One in five engaged couples in Greece avoid getting married in a leap year because they believe it's bad luck.

In Italy, legend has it that women are erratic during a leap year, and several proverbs warn against planning important life events in a leap year. *Anno bisesto, anno funesto* means leap year, doom year.

5. Workers paid fixed annual or monthly salaries essentially work for free on February 29 because wages are not usually calculated to account for the extra day. And prisoners with one-year sentences must serve the extra day if the term crosses leap day.

6. People born on February 29 are called leaplings or leapers. The chance of being born on a leap day is one in 1,461. There are five million leaplings around the world.

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BOLD as bath

Brighten up your bathroom with weird but wonderful wallpaper

From hilarious books detailing *What to do on the Loo* to your Space Hopper 100yd trophy award gleaned from a late nineties trip to Butlins, the British bathroom has long been a place where we exhibit our most whimsical and wacky sides.

The current trend for zany wallpaper, then, makes a welcome addition to this unpredictable canon.

But before you head to the shops, bear in mind that silly can also be stylish. For example, walls adorned with meticulous depictions of tropical fish become a knowing nod to your nautical themed family bathroom. Meanwhile, wallpaper portraying a Victorian theatre audience in stunning detail makes a dull downstairs loo feel fanciful and droll.

Those with horticultural fancies can bring the outdoors in with bright blooms and roses realised in digital floral prints; skyscapes awash with beautiful songbirds in bold technicolour, or even an elaborate jungle scene resplendent with tropical palms, playful

monkeys and sneering tigers.

You can also keep it simple with a splatter paint-inspired wallpaper, which brings a modern touch to your toilet. Similarly, ombré patterns in rose pinks and twilight blues are perfect for those who want a moody and evocative powder room for late-night guests.

There are few interior trends that offer such versatility, to the extent that if your bathroom is already tiled, you can still devote even the smallest space to this decorative craft. Given the nature of the toilet, the back of the door makes a perfect place to entertain your visitors with a collage of your favourite film posters, magazine covers or comic strips – a design that is not only entirely unique but also affordable!

So next time you reach for the trusty white paint or black-and-white tiles, think: does this really show off my personality? For if ever there was a place we Brits like to lose ourselves, it's in the loo.



HOME & DIY



Photo credit: Dulux via dezeen.com, decopeedia.nl, living etc, dulux.com

Tranquil Dawn

Dulux Colour of the Year



Interior designers and homeowners across the country have been waiting with bated breath to discover what shade Dulux has named as its Colour of the Year for 2020.

And it couldn't be more different from last year's strong Spiced Honey shade.

Why has Dulux chosen Tranquil Dawn as this year's Colour of the Year?

This cool-tone shade of green, which is extremely versatile, was picked to offer an antidote to an "increasingly disconnected" modern society.

What exactly does this mean?

Put simply, Dulux believes that modern technologies have left us feeling chaotic and lost, unable to identify with what makes us human. Therefore, this calming and natural shade is supposed to remind us of our real selves and the natural world around us.

How can you use Tranquil Dawn in your home?

What makes this colour different from other shades of green is its ability to subtly shift its tone depending on what other shades it is used with, allowing you to create many different vibes in your home.

Design a luxurious living room

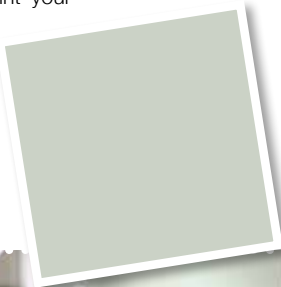
Combine Tranquil Dawn with a soft, sandy shade to create a living room that is warm, inviting and promotes positive social interactions.

Create a calming bedroom

Jumping on the two-tone trend, paint the top half of your bedroom walls in Tranquil Dawn and the bottom in a soothing shade of bluey-grey. Not only will these make your bedroom appear more spacious, they will also bring the focus on to the bed, which should be the main feature in a room designed for restoration.

Update your woodwork

If you don't fancy steering away from your preferred wall colours, why not paint your woodwork in Tranquil Dawn? This versatile shade has been matched with 36 other colours by Dulux so there are literally thousands of combinations you could go with.



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BACK TO THE FUTURE

FUTURISM, THE LATEST TREND IN HOME DÉCOR, TAKES ALL THE BEST ELEMENTS FROM THE PAST AND PLACES THEM FIRMLY IN THE MODERN WORLD

We may not be zooming around on spaceships just yet or wearing anti-gravity belts, but beloved 1960s cartoon *The Jetsons* certainly predicted some of the technology we now use daily. But beyond video calls and smartwatches, the futuristic family also had some very enviable décor in their Orbit City apartment, as style which is very much the basis of futurism.

Presenting a retro vision of the future, this trend incorporates many classic furniture pieces from the past – think the classic Eames lounge chair, the Thunderbird sofa and pendulum floor lamps – against a colour palate and textural backdrop that is extremely up to date.

Think stainless steel lighting fixtures and rich suede furnishings against a textural rose-gold wall, curvaceous fibreglass dining table and chairs with a huge overhanging light, and heavy granite coffee tables on textural rugs in ethereal hues.

A style that is utterly earthbound but also out of this world, it evokes all the best scenes from classic sci-fi... the *Star Trek* command deck if it had Laurence Llewelyn-Bowen at its helm, or a luxury condo on Magrathea.

So how do you incorporate a little stardust into your current home? Consider adding a little textural juxtaposition, such as natural stone sculptures or clay vases against embossed wallpaper. You can also invest in another current trend of the moment: cacti. These magnificent, verdant beauties stand out beautifully against a softer colour background and are reassuringly low maintenance as well.

In all, futurism isn't something to fear; it's to be embraced – oh, and by the way, it's here right now.





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HOME & DIY

REWIND DESIGN

Introducing the Laura Hodges Studio

At first glance, Laura Hodges' style sensibilities appear to originate directly from the New York mode of interior design. Consider Tribeca and Greenwich Village and you'll be close to referencing her take on a look that embraces antique excellence with clean lines, draws in comfort and durability, and closes out with more than a hint of feng shui.

And yet, not only does this visionary now operate out of Washington, but her inspirations are also more Vivienne Westwood than Val Kilmer, given that she hails from the earthy, warehouse-driven, post-industrial blueprint afforded by 1980s Manchester.

In addition, the designer has travelled to more than 30 different countries in pursuit of a mood modus operandi that has her talked about as one of the true emerging names, in a marketplace for ideas that twists and turns at every new room,

corridor or window display.

"My mother was British, my father Jamaican and my grandmother Norwegian, and with a passion for absorbing ideas from the places I have visited, you could say I have a wide realm of influences all crashing and colliding together," Laura says.

In a material sense, that produces a look that's bold and classic, using high-contrast elements that are clean and classical.

It brings in vintage, antique and eclectic, yet on a base that's flat, uncomplicated and crisp. The premise is to move art and furniture to the foreground against a backdrop that complements its lack of complication.

"People are really responding positively to such a bold, tailored and sustainable approach," she says. "There is a lot of fog in the world and to bring forward any environment that offers a bit of clarity must surely be good for the mind."

Touted as one of the stylists to follow in 2020, Hodges' studio is already attracting major clients, but with a look and image that anyone can replicate, her design is as relevant for Bolton as it is for Baltimore.

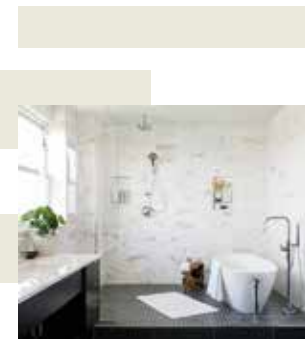


Photo credit: www.laurahodgestudio.com



Off-Piste

NOT OFF COLOUR

FARROW & BALL AND THE PAINT NAME GAME

It's said there are more than 1,000 shades of white in existence, so with that in mind it's little wonder the paint purveyors of our interior design outlets may occasionally go rogue in naming their latest combinations. While you might expect that of high-street brands such as Dulux and Crown, even 'next level' producers Farrow & Ball have started mixing up their paints (literally). The brand that sells itself on its insistence of using fewer binding agents and less water, adding in chalk, china clay, titanium dioxide and, most importantly, only using real pigments, has been going off-piste, albeit never off colour:

COLOUR #229 ELEPHANT'S BREATH

A greying beige to the untrained eye, this can be used by itself or as part of a 'stone' scheme, and thankfully doesn't come as a 'scratch & sniff' variety.

COLOUR #25 PIGEON

Apparently based on late 18th- and 19th-century paint collections, twitches would be forgiven for thinking the homing bird used to camouflage with trees and grass, given that the colour is closer to green than grey.

COLOUR #28 DEAD SALMON

This shade is a reference not to a deceased member of the fish community liberally splattered across your bedroom walls, but rather to the 'flat' or 'dead' finish of the salmon colour. While it remains slightly strange, it still sounds better than #290, Salmon Drab.

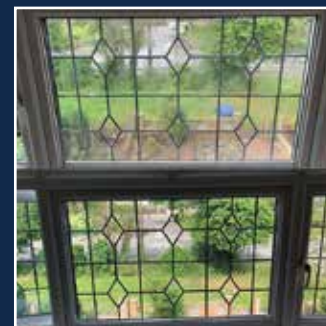
COLOUR #214 ARSENIC

A highly toxic semi-metallic substance that is grey or yellow in its raw form, and burns blue, is chosen to represent what many laymen would term 'medium green'. Figure that one out.

Other odd names include #276 MOLE'S BREATH, #245 MIDDLETON PINK, #W108 BROCCOLI BROWN and #40 MOUSE'S BACK.

Of course, when it comes to home decoration, it matters not whether you go Tom Ford or Henry Ford, whether you pay £10 for a pot of rich gloss or £100... ultimately it's all about whether it lands on the wall without any landing on the carpet.

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HOME & DIY

5 uses for a PAPER BAG

If you think that paper bags can only be used for bringing your shopping home from the supermarket, then think again. These environmentally friendly carriers are ideal for a number of household tasks and DIY projects.

MAKE DIY WOVEN BASKETS

You can never have enough storage solutions in your home, and these DIY baskets are ideal for smaller items such as keys or sewing materials. Simply cut your paper bag into long strips and then, starting with the base, start weaving. Finish with a handle if desired.

CLEAN YOUR WINDOWS

If you have ever experienced problems in getting your windows to shine rather than streak, then a paper bag could be your saviour. Merely tear up your bag, scrunch it together and get scrubbing. You can also apply a light spray of white vinegar for increased sparkle.

WRAP PRESENTS

With the sudden surge in nature-inspired design and décor, why not jump on the bandwagon and create some sustainable wrapping paper? Just cut up your paper bag, lay it out flat and then wrap up your item. Add some simple twine and a sprig of your favourite herb to create a unique and gorgeous gift.

CREATE DIY LANTERNS

Whether you want to create an inviting atmosphere for your next party or just love to experiment with crafts and candles, this is the ideal project for you. Simply use silhouette stamps to create your chosen design and then pop an LED candle into your bag. Do not use a real lit tea light or candle for safety reasons as the bag is flammable.

IN THE KITCHEN TWO WAYS

1. Ripen fruit. Place your fruit in a paper bag, seal and leave at room temperature for a few days. The result? Perfectly sweet and juicy fruit.
2. Make popcorn. Simply pour ¼ cup of uncooked popcorn kernels into a plain paper bag, seal and cook in the microwave for 2½ minutes or until the popping stops.

Photo credit: denise carbonell/Flickr/CC BY 2.0, One Good Thing by Jillee, www.notonthehighstreet.com, www.amazon.co.uk, www.allrecipes.com

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Outrage as smash and grab leaves high-street business in a mess

The community has voiced its outrage after a technology repair shop in Billericay High Street was ransacked by thieves.

B Smash Mobile Repair was broken into at around 6.35am on January 20.

The front door of the shop was smashed, leaving glass covering the floor and the pavement outside.

Inside it was also a mess, with the raid leaving a devastating impact on its owners. The raiders stole a number of items, including mobile phones.

The shop was forced to close following the break-in and it updated customers with what had happened.

It said: "Dear customers, our mobile shop will be closed today due to robbery in our shop. Some low-level people broke in and stole phones."

The community quickly rallied around the shop and its owners.

Sam McElhinney said: "This is disgraceful and really sad to see. Billericay is getting worse and worse for this sort of thing and it impacts real people and real businesses.

"Let's get the scum responsible caught and dealt with."

Julie Thomas said: "I feel so sorry for the owners. They obviously work really hard to run their business so this is devastating."

A spokesman for Essex Police said: "We were called to reports of a burglary at a shop in High Street, Billericay, at around 6.35am on Monday, January 20.

"Items including a laptop, tablet, mobile phones, and money were taken.

"If you have any information about the incident, call us on 101 quoting incident 128 of 20 January or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111."



Photo credit: Google Maps

Concerns about the high street as Argos faces closure

A resident has voiced her concern after the latest in a long list of retailers announced plans to close its Billericay store.

Argos announced on January 17 that the Billericay High Street branch will close, leading to one resident sharing her concern about the demise of the town centre.

In total 14, units are empty on Billericay High Street, with the news from Argos only adding to the woes.

Resident Sarah Smithies said: "It is a real shame that Argos is adding to list of shops that will be empty.

"We have a lovely town but it can very quickly go backwards if we continue to see shops close.

"There is a snowball effect where when shops close

it leads to others.

"Let's not become another commuter town; I urge people to use the High Street and support businesses open in Billericay."

The Billericay branch of Argos has been open on the high street for more than a decade.

It's not yet known when the store's official last day will be, but it has been confirmed that those currently working at the shop have been offered roles elsewhere within the company.

A spokesperson for Argos said: "Our Argos Billericay store is closing and all of our colleagues have been offered the opportunity to redeploy to our nearby stores."

Man jailed for filming girls in changing rooms

A paedophile from Billericay has been jailed after he tried to film girls changing at a swimming pool with a key ring spy camera.

Robert Prior was sentenced to two years and nine months in prison on January 6 and also given an indefinite Sexual Harm Prevention Order.

Between 2017 and 2018, Prior visited the London Aquatics Centre at the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in Stratford to prey on young girls.

He went equipped with a key ring 'spy camera' in a bid to try to capture indecent images.

Fortunately, he was unsuccessful, and no indecent images of anyone using the pool were actually taken.

Officers searched his Billericay home in July 2018 after receiving information that he had been discussing the sexual abuse of children with others online.

During the search, officers seized a number of items,

including his phone, laptop and the key ring camera.

When the devices were forensically examined, officers found indecent images of children on his phone and laptop and found deleted films on the key ring camera.

Officers also established that Prior had discussed the sexual abuse of children online with another person, whom he had then met up with to view indecent images of children.

Investigating officer PC Sam Kyle, from the police online investigation team, said: "Robert Prior carried out a plan to try to film young girls as they changed but fortunately was not successful.

"His crimes will have a lasting impact on those affected and I hope this sentence will help them move forward.

"He did at least admit his crimes and will now be spending the foreseeable future behind bars."

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Vital service seeks volunteers



Citizens Advice South Essex (CASE) is inviting residents in Billericay to join the service as volunteers, as it looks to improve its helpline service.

The service has launched a recruitment drive for its branches in Billericay, Basildon Brentwood, Rayleigh, Rochford, Thurrock and Wickford.

CASE currently has 189 volunteers who give an average of one day a week and have been trained to help people with all manner of problems.

Many volunteers are retirees or parents whose children are now at school, who want to do something rewarding and challenging.

Neil Sumner, 64, of Billericay, has been volunteering for more than eight years.

He said: "The most rewarding thing is you see people who are facing a brick wall, and although you can't knock it down for them, you can help remove a few bricks so they can see a way forward, and you just see the relief on their face. And they know they can come back to us for further support if they need it."

For more information or to find out how to volunteer visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/local/south-essex

News from the local policing team

The Billericay town centre and community policing team have been hard at work patrolling the High Street and responding to issues raised by the local community and businesses.

After information was received from concerned local residents, a warrant was executed at a property in north Billericay, where two males were arrested on suspicion of supplying class A drugs, taking a quantity of drugs off the streets. At the

time of writing, the investigation remains ongoing, pending forensic enquires.

The town centre has seen continued focus, with officers being in both high visibility and plain clothes. Proactive tackling of both vehicle-related anti-social behaviour and drug offences saw Community Policing Team officers locating several vehicles believed to be involved. The vehicles and occupants were searched and two males were arrested on suspicion of drugs supply. Both have been released under investigation.

The dedicated town centre officers have continued to work with local retailers and businesses. Two prolific shoplifters who often target Billericay businesses were arrested and charged for several theft offences. They were remanded in police custody and put before the magistrates.

This work is only possible with the help from the local community; the information you provide is key to keeping our streets safe.

Council vows to refund parking charges

Council chiefs have vowed to refund motorists who paid to park in Billericay despite a promotional free parking scheme being in place.

A car park just off Billericay High Street was included in Basildon Council's free parking scheme, which covered council-operated car parks for two weeks until December 30.

However, it is understood that signs informing motorists that parking was free were not put up in time, meaning some paid for parking unnecessarily.

Now the council has said it will refund those who paid, much to the relief of resident Susan Tilsley.

She said: "It's not a lot of money but it is the right thing that people are being refunded. Hopefully the scheme returns again but better signage is put up."

A Basildon Council spokesperson said: "We will offer a refund to any customers of our car parks who may have purchased tickets on December 16.

"For more information, email carparks@basildon.gov.uk"



Photo credit: Laurence Berger/Shutterstock.com

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BILLERICAY TOWN FC

LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY



Photo credit: Nicky Hayes Photography

Ricay looking to end on a high

Billericay Town FC are heading towards the final third of a mixed season which could yet end up with some silverware being won.

Ricay at this stage seem favourites to retain their Vanarama National League South status, but the season could have some extra gloss in the form of the Essex Senior Cup.

Having already recorded a memorable 3-2 victory against League One side Southend United in the Third Round before beating Basildon 1-0, they find themselves in the quarter-final.

In the last eight they will face Grays, who are mid-table in the Isthmian League North.

That fixture was meant to be played on January 21, but a frozen pitch meant the game was postponed.

Billericay will fancy their chances of making the semi-finals of a competition they have previously won three times, with their last success having come in the 2017/18 season.

For that final push, Billericay have strengthened, with the

signing of young striker Brian Galaxy in an initial one-month loan from League Two side Crawley Town.

The Polish-born 18-year-old was with Leyton Orient's youth system before joining Aldershot, where he was a prolific marksman during the 2018/19 season, scoring an eye-watering 43 goals for the U23s. The forward player had various contract offers from Polish first-division clubs before heading to Crawley Town in June 2018. He made his full debut against Portsmouth in October 2018 and his League bow in the final game of last season against Tranmere.

Manager Jamie O'Hara has also hinted that Josh Urquhart could return to Billericay Town for a fourth spell in the summer.

The defender last left the club as he was unable to comply with Billericay's training schedule. It is unlikely he will return until the summer.

Urquhart played a key role as Billericay won the treble – the Isthmian Premier League title along with the Essex Senior Cup and Isthmian League Cup – in 2018.



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Photo credit: Rick Fothergill

Further cuts at library as staff benefit disappears

A campaign group has criticised "another cut" as staff at Shenfield library will now be charged for any overdue items.

The campaign group Save Our Libraries Essex (SOLE) has spoken out after Essex County Council announced plans to start charging Essex library staff for items returned late, including CDs and DVDs.

The change came into effect from January 1, marking an end to a benefit that library staff across the county enjoyed.

One of those with first-hand experience about the benefit is Andrew Coburn, who is a qualified librarian with several decades under his belt in libraries in Essex.

He now campaigns for SOLE and is a treasurer at the National Library Campaign.

He said: "The only privileges that staff had have now been removed.

"Apart from anything else, the entitlement allowed staff to examine new books and DVDs more freely, which in turn helped them to further advise library users.

"It seems a petty step to take – it will result in little extra income for the council and is another blow to staff morale, which must be low enough with everything else that is going on."

Meanwhile, a SOLE spokesperson said: "Well-rewarded staff are vital to a decent library service in our county. When staff are downtrodden and morale is low, the service library users receive will suffer.

"And it is yet another cut to our libraries where the cost saving will be tiny. What on earth is Essex County Council doing?"

SOLE recently held a 'save our librarians – no closures by stealth' day of action in Shenfield, handing out leaflets on January 25 in the Broadway.

Cricket legend aiming to reach World Cup final



England's over-50s cricket team are preparing for the World Cup, with Shenfield's Peter Rider at the helm.

This year's event is being held in South Africa from March 10 to 24, with Cape Town and Stellenbosch playing host to the world's best over-50 cricketers.

As the competition nears, England has named its squad, with manager Peter targeting the final.

The World Cup in South Africa follows on from the 2016 event in which he led England to the semi-final where they were beaten by Pakistan.

In South Africa, Peter will welcome eight new players into the team as his evolution of the squad continues.

He told **VISION** Billericay Shenfield: "Our target has to be to go one better and reach the final at Newlands.

"The squad has evolved since the Sydney World Cup, winning three in three last summer in a short series against Wales.

"In Cape Town the intense itinerary is problematical, with potentially seven games in 16 days. That is followed swiftly by two Silver Ashes in one-day internationals.

"For me, the biggest challenge is to rotate the 16-man squad in group games and arrive at the semis with everyone relatively fresh and injury free."

Residents urged to sign up and save money

Residents in Shenfield are being urged to sign up for the Essex Energy Switch before February 10 to save money.

The scheme, run by Essex County Council (ECC), could potentially save you money on your gas and electricity bills.

All you need to register is a copy of your latest energy bill; it's free and you could save up to £250. ECC said: "The best part is we do all the hard work for you, meaning you don't have to waste time hunting around for the best deals.

"In fact, the tariffs offered through the Essex Energy Switch are often cheaper than those found on price-comparison sites.

"There is no obligation to switch providers once you've registered, and the more people who sign up, the bigger the potential saving per household.

"If you registered last year, you will need to register again this year to continue saving."

To find out more search Essex Energy Switch on Google.

Bar to reopen a year after death

A Shenfield man was found dead.

Paul Wellington was involved in an altercation outside a bar in Brentwood on Christmas Eve 2018.

Following Paul's death, the bar closed and a police investigation has been ongoing. A man was charged in January with manslaughter.

Paul died in hospital five days after the attack. Leslie Wiseman, 30, of Whitehouse Meadows, Leigh-on-Sea is now facing court action.

The bar, called The Vine, closed after an investigation found "lack of control by management of the door staff", and subsequently its licence was revoked.

Then in October 2019 a panel decided to issue permission for the bar to reopen on the condition that owner Andreas Artemi would not be the licence holder.

At the time of writing, the bar says it is to reopen on February 1.

Brentwood Borough Council was asked to confirm the bar will reopen but had not responded at the time of going to print.



Photo credit: Google Maps

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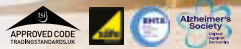
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HOW BRITAIN CONVERTED TO DECIMAL CURRENCY

For those who lived through them, the 1970s are often regarded as a decade of struggle. Yet while the Three Day Week, bin strikes, economic decline and David Bowie's morphing into alter ego Ziggy Stardust proved troubling for some, Britain could at least thank the decade for decimalisation, a positive event that saw us take a needy grip on our currency... if only people had more of it in their pockets.

This new dawn began the morning after Valentine's Day 1971. And sure enough, the people were quick to embrace a love affair with multiples of 10 and 100, in the process bidding farewell to the sixpence, florin, crown and half crown – some of which had been a part of everyday life for centuries.

In truth, although the conversion may officially took effect on February 15, changes had been phased in over the course of months and even years. Indeed, it was 1966 when Parliament announced we were set for the country's greatest ever single currency change. Then, in 1968, some three years before D-Day (Decimal Day), new 5p and 10p coins were introduced. Simple replacements for the existing shilling and two-shilling coins, they were followed by a 50p coin in the shape of a heptagon. And then, finally, on D-Day, half-pennies, 1p and 2p coins were worked into circulation.

A huge public information campaign was fired up in the days and weeks leading up to the big day, meaning, for the most part, that British shopkeepers and their customers were ready... but were the banks? In short, no – the huge task of removing an entire currency from the system meant a massive physical operation in every city, high street and rural bank. As a result, our financial institutions closed for four days to prepare for the changeover.

When they reopened, the way we bought goods and services would never be the same again.



2 FARTHINGs = 1 HALFPENNY
 2 HALFPENCE = 1 PENNY
 3 PENCE = 1 THRUPPENCE
 6 PENCE = 1 SIXPENCE - A 'TANNER'
 12 PENCE = 1 SHILLING - A BOB
 2 SHILLINGS = 1 FLORIN - A 'TWO BOB BIT'
 5 SHILLINGS = 1 CROWN
 20 SHILLINGS = 1 POUND

HISTORY





TURNED OFF

BY TECH

FIVE TORRID TECHNOLOGY FAILURES



AMAZON FIREPHONE

An android mobile device designed to capitalise on the incredible success of the Kindle Fire eBook readers and Fire tablets, this 2014 launch was set to catapult the brand into the communications mainstream while also knitting together its retail and film elements.

The phone only lasted a year, though, as Jeff Bezos found the might of Samsung, Apple and co to be impenetrable.

OCULUS RIFT

When Mark Zuckerberg got behind the virtual reality market, there was the expectation that technology and consumer interest would be catapulted forward, but it hasn't happened. As Oculus trips through new products – such as the Quest – a persistent lukewarm response seems to imply that headset hedonists are few and far between.



GOOGLE GLASS

Evidence, as if it were needed, that while tech is a big part of our lives, we don't want to be imprisoned by it. The Google Glass threatened just that – 24/7 connectivity and the ability to answer stressful work emails even when relaxing in the bath. Great.

Ultimately, the failure of the 'smart glasses' came down to the fact that it was never going to be a big job to reach into a pocket and pull out a mobile phone.

APPLE MAPS

When angling for a place in the Google Maps market, Apple launched its own cartography app, but users rapidly found the service to be inferior, with poor directional capabilities, a lack of detail on city plans and, in some cases, fictitious information. At one point, Ireland's Ministry of Defence had to warn users that a non-existent airport was showing near Dublin. Y'know, minor problems...



SINCLAIR C5

The Sinclair C5 was a fully electric, low-riding vehicle that was meant to span the gap between car and bike. Owing to its low speed, poor battery life and the fact any encounters with buses or lorries were set to leave the rider paralysed by fear, production ceased after seven months.

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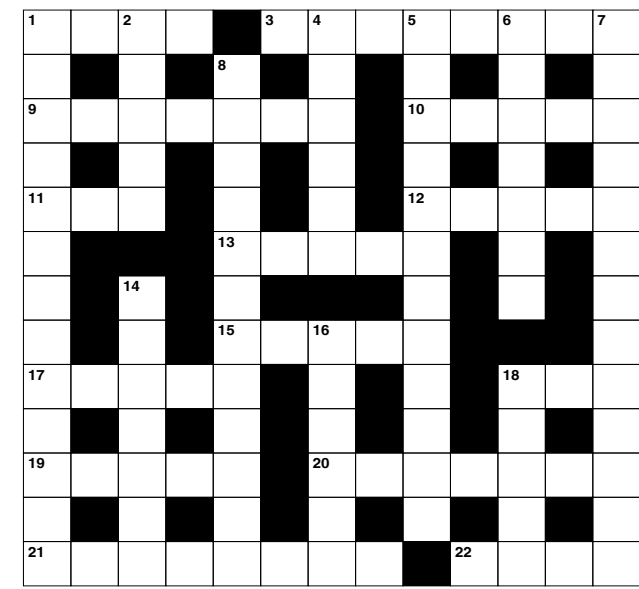
PUZZLES & TRIVIA

ACROSS

- Creative disciplines (4)
- Unyielding (8)
- Shock with wonder (7)
- Happening (5)
- Cut of pork (3)
- Public square (5)
- At that place; not here (5)
- Stem of an arrow (5)
- Individual things (5)
- Popular beverage (3)
- Instruct; teach (5)
- Mark the boundaries of (7)
- Lenience (8)
- In a tense state (4)

DOWN

- Misplaced in time or date (13)
- Motet (anag) (5)
- Small parrot (informal) (6)
- By chance (12)
- Mediocre (7)
- Wastefully; lavishly (13)
- Most perfect example of a quality (12)
- Get ready (7)



- Sour to the taste (6)
- Shy (5)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ An octopus has three hearts. They need all of them to circulate blood through their bodies
- ▶ African penguins can swim underwater for up to two and a half minutes trying to catch small fish
- ▶ The cheetah is the world's fastest land mammal. It can accelerate from 0 to 60mph in three seconds
- ▶ Polar bears don't hibernate, but females enter into a dormant state while pregnant
- ▶ Dark patches around meerkats' eyes help them be effective lookouts by reducing the glare of the sun
- ▶ Unlike other cats, lions are social animals and live in prides. They can keep track of one another by roaring

SUDOKU

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PETS

Choosing your

PET NAMES

THE MOST POPULAR AND MOST PUZZLING PET NAMES IN 2020

While the pet market has never been more buoyant in the UK, it seems neither has our ability to label our loved ones with popular and puzzling names in equal measure.

We looked at some of the quaint and curious titles given to four of our favourite fluffy ones.

DOGS

The most popular dog names all revolve around the traditional, happy-go-lucky and cute echoes of having a pet in the home. That means Bella, Charlie, Luna, Lucy, Max and Bailey feature high up on lists, with the likes of Cooper, Daisy, Sadie and Molly also ranking as popular.

For unusual names, consider Shakespeare, Soup, Bug, Hawtry and, of course, plain old Dave. And if you want to sound clever when beckoning your pooch over in the park, what about Mary Poppins?

CATS

As far as felines go, Oliver, Bella, Simba, Chloe, Luna, Max, Lucy, Lily, Nala and Sophie all rank highly.

For the more unusual tags, try Tucker, Lulu or Winston. And again, for the clever clogs (or should that be claws), try Kitty-Purry, Harry Pawtter, or even Mr Meowgi. Ouch.

HAMSTERS

Low maintenance and incredibly tame, hamsters are loveable pets good for all ages. And while you might be happy to give them one of the UK's most popular names, in the form of Bob, Chewy, Comet, Fudge, Hamlet, Paws, Rocky or Stitch, could you really bring yourself to go for such leftfield options as Keyboard, Vanilla, Kujo or Rags? No... thought not.

RABBITS

Finally rabbits, and if you believe Thumper, Cinnamon, Snowball or Oreo are a bit overdone, perhaps consider Bunilla Ice, Rabbit Downey Jr or Like Skyhopper.



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As BOLD as ice

Dancing on Ice glides over new ground as Ian Watkins and Matt Evers are unveiled as the show's first same-sex duo

.....

It's both encouraging and demoralising that ITV's dance reality show *Dancing on Ice* should court so many headlines over the decision to showcase its first same-sex couple – encouraging in the sense that prime-time television is embracing a move regarded as an industry first; demoralising in the sense that such a simple reflection of everyday society finds itself worthy of headlines in the first place.

Equality campaigners will also point to how long it has taken the terrestrial networks to reach this point, although there is still no indication that BBC big brother *Strictly Come Dancing* will follow suit.

The dancers in question are Ian Watkins – former member of Steps and better known by his stage name of H – and professional dancer Matt Evers, whose debut performance in the first week of January wowed the live audience and provoked widespread approval across social media.

The pair, who are both openly gay, have captured the imagination and admiration of the watching audience during an era in which LGBT issues are at the forefront of hearts and minds.

ITV's decision to feature the pair will almost certainly prove a ratings winner; but more

than that, it is hoped the move will set a positive precedent across other prime-time shows, reflecting the progressive values of acceptance, tolerance and respect that our nation has always found itself a world leader in displaying.

Watkins said after the first dance, "It was emotional, because I have wanted this for so long and it means so much to so many people, and the world is ready for this."

The judges – including Jayne Torvill, Christopher Dean and Ashley Banjo – were ubiquitous in their acclaim of the dancers, while John Barrowman broke down in tears in admiration of the duo.

He said to the performers, "I am emotional; it makes me happy on a complete multitude of levels, just because of seeing two men who represent someone who is like me, and to skate as well as you did... you've done it now, the nerves are out of the way."

Watkins and Evers are second-favourites to take the crown, though they have tough competition in the 2020 edition of the show, which regularly attracts viewing figures in excess of six million. Also present in the 12th iteration of the reality series are, among others, model Caprice, Paralympic sprinter Libby Clegg, presenter Joe Swash and former footballer Kevin Kilbane, with Diversity dancer Perri Kiely tipped as early favourite to lift the *Dancing on Ice* crown.

As for Evers, who is a former world figure-skating competitor, he credits both Watkins and the show's producers for taking such a positive step. "I just have to say thank you to the network, thank you to ITV and thank you to everybody at home who is accepting of this, because this is normal... this is absolutely normal.

"This is my 12th series of *Dancing on Ice* and this year is special. This journey is going to mean a lot to a lot of people in this country and around the world."

It's not ROCKERY SCIENCE

A rockery makes the perfect garden feature, adding structure and providing the ideal environment for alpine plants. Plus, you can recycle any unwanted bricks or tiles you have lying around.

FIND THE IDEAL SPOT

Before you start building your rockery, you need to pick the perfect location that will allow plants to thrive. Alpine plants, the type you need for a rockery, need lots of light, so it is important that you choose an area that is not overshadowed by trees or shrubs.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT ROCKS

Depending on your budget, you can either visit your local reclamation yard to pick whatever rocks you like (natural-looking ones work best), or you can utilise any broken bricks, tiles or even paving slabs that you have left over from another DIY project.

CLEAR THE GROUND

The worst thing for a rockery is an abundance of

weeds as they can weaken or damage it over the years. Therefore, you must ensure that you thoroughly remove any existing weeds. Then you should add a layer of rubble on the ground, which will improve drainage and support the rocks. Finally, cover these with landscape fabric.

POSITION THE ROCKS

Start with the larger rocks, creating a mountain shape, and make sure to point them in a variety of directions. Use smaller rocks and topsoil to stabilise them. Next, add smaller rocks in a horseshoe shape to create planting pockets.

MAKE ALPINE COMPOST

If you want your plants to thrive in your rockery, then they need the right type of compost. Alpine compost should be made up of weed-free topsoil, leaf mould and horticultural grit.

ADD PLANTS IN EARLY SPRING

Plants that love rocky ground include:
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PLANT OF THE MONTH:

Lilies

Who doesn't love to be gifted a beautiful bunch of lilies? Among the most recognisable flowers in the UK, lilies are known for their stunning scent, their bold colours and their imposing size.

And, thankfully, they are relatively easy to grow.

When should I plant lilies?

Lily bulbs can be planted as early as autumn or winter, but they are perfectly fine to plant in early spring as long as they are in by the end of March.

Where should I plant my lily bulbs?

Lilies will reappear year after year, so it is important that you bear this in mind when choosing where to plant them. As a rule, they like a sunny spot or an area with some light shade. However, brightly coloured lilies keep their colour better in areas with consistent shade.

How to plant lily bulbs

Soak your bulbs in warm water for 12 hours before planting – this will save you 2–3 weeks of growing time | Plant your lily bulbs in groups of 3–5 for a more effective display | Dig a 20cm -deep hole for each group of bulbs | Spread a 5cm layer of grit over the bottom for improved drainage | Plant the bulbs pointy end up | Cover with soil

How to protect your lilies

Lily leaf beetles are your lilies' biggest threat, with the ability to munch their way through their foliage and flowers when they are in bloom. Luckily, these beetles are easy to see and can be easily squashed with your fingers. Alternatively, spray the beetles with a mixture of olive oil and water.

What do lilies represent?

Lilies symbolise humility and devotion and this is why they are the 30th wedding anniversary flower. They are also often used at funerals to symbolise that the soul of the deceased has had their innocence returned after death.



GARDENING





REACH NEW HEIGHTS

with these captivating climbers

Climbing plants are a great way to add height and structure to your garden, as well being ideal for covering up boring and unsightly walls or fences. Plus, there are so many bold and beautiful climbing plants for you to choose from.

Climbing Hydrangea – Best for a shady wall

This hardy yet attractive plant is ideal for planting up a shady wall as it needs little sunlight to thrive. Expect beautiful white flowers and lime-green foliage that blooms in late spring.

Plant climbing hydrangeas all year round as long as the ground is not frozen or excessively dry.

Winter Jasmine – Best for a low-growing wall or fence

Known for its dazzling yellow flowers, although not technically a climbing plant as it does not twine or have tendrils to hang on with, winter jasmine is a scrambler by nature. Therefore, it is the perfect plant for spilling over a low ground wall and providing a splash of colour in the winter.

Plant in early spring for winter flowering.

Hedera Ivy – Best for sheds or dark corners

Arguably the most easy climbing plant to grow, ivy is extremely tough but can also be fairly invasive, so do not grow it near a tree or your home. However, it can make an attractive addition to your garden and is perfect for brightening up a particularly dark corner that would otherwise go unnoticed.

Plant all year round, preferably in limy soil, although it will grow pretty much anywhere.

Mahonia aka Winter Sun – Best for a house wall

This evergreen shrub is best grown on a house wall so that you can fully enjoy its rich fragrance. Expect bold evergreen leaves and upright yellow flower spikes that will uplift any garden.

Plant in early spring, in partial or full shade.

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Must-have items for anyone getting into gardening

PRUNING SHEARS

So much to do with gardening involves keeping nature at bay, so getting a decent pair of pruning shears is essential, whether that's trimming back rose stems or dealing with an unruly bush.

A SOIL KNIFE

Looking like something out of *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, a soil knife (or hori-hori) is a Japanese tool with a blade on one side and serrated edge on the other. It will cut through roots deep in the soil, so weeding and plant removal from deep in the ground is quick and easy.

WEEDER

A weeder is brilliant for removing plant matter caught between paving slabs, along edges and in small ruts. The days of backbreaking yanking of weeds are over with a tool you can use standing up, and which will swiftly bring back to life even the most overgrown of patios.

RAKE

Leaf debris can make even the healthiest of gardens appear unkempt, but your friendly rake will sweep aside any dead matter to give a smooth finish to any lawn. And, of course, you can also use it on soil.

SHOVEL AND TROWEL

There's nothing quite like digging a hole when wanting to feel connected to nature, and providing your back can deal with the impact of hammering a metal blade into soil that, inevitably, will have lumps of rock in it, shovel away to your heart's content. And of course, for smaller areas, and when tending to garden beds, a trowel is a must-have.

KNEELING PAD

Traditional gardeners like Monty Don may turn their noses up at the sight of one, but for little more than a fiver you can save you knees from impending, aching doom with a soft kneeling pad.

A HOSE

You'll need your garden's life source available on tap, literally, so a good hose for watering is essential.



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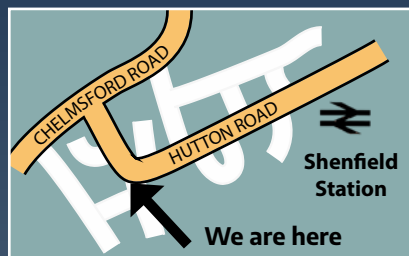
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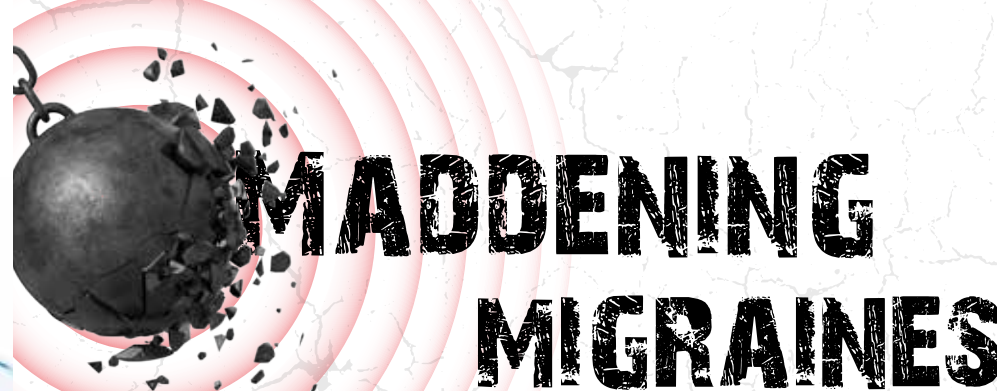


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Anyone who experiences migraines will know only too well the tell-tale signs, including nausea, vomiting, an increased sensitivity to light and sound, and, of course, the unbearable throbbing pain on the side of your head.

WHAT CAUSES MIGRAINES?

Around 1 in 5 women and 1 in every 15 men experience migraines. The exact cause of this debilitating affliction is still unknown, although some experts believe that it could be the result of a temporary change in the chemicals, blood vessels and nerves in the brain. Migraines can also be hereditary, as well as be brought on by stress, tiredness and/or specific foods and drinks.

HOW CAN YOU PREVENT MIGRAINES?

Although there is no sure fire way to prevent a migraine from happening, there are ways that you can lower your risk of experiencing one, namely avoiding the triggers that are causing your migraines, whether that be stress or a particular food. It is also advised to lead a healthy lifestyle with adequate sleep, exercise and ensuring that you

stay hydrated. Alcohol and caffeine should be avoided.

HOW CAN YOU RELIEVE THE SYMPTOMS OF A MIGRAINE?

Sadly, there is no miracle cure, but there are some medicines that you can take to help alleviate your symptoms, such as painkillers like paracetamol or ibuprofen, anti-emetics and/or triptans. Triptans are a specific type of medicine that are designed to reverse the changes in your brain that actively cause migraines and are normally prescribed to people who suffer from severe migraines.

Other tips that may help you feel better include:

- Using a cold pack
- Dimming the lights or sitting in a dark room
- Using a heat pad
- Practising some relaxation techniques
- Trying not to chew
- Drinking some ginger tea
- Giving yourself a scalp massage





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TEA FOR TWO?

Why not try Kombucha?

Fermented foods and drinks have been experiencing a surge in popularity in recent years, with many people singing the praise of this refreshing, if not slightly sour, tea that is known for being rich in antioxidants and probiotics.

How to make Kombucha at home (1L)

You will need;

1L water (dechlorinated) | 1 teabag (black tea is considered to be the best but other tea can be used) | 50-100g sugar (cane sugar is advised) | 1 small scoby (these can be bought online) | 100ml starter liquid (this will come with the scoby)

How to make;

Boil 250ml water | Add the teabag and sugar, stirring until dissolved | Brew for 10 minutes | Remove teabag | Add the rest of the cold water | Add the scoby and starter liquid | Ensure you leave a minimum of a 5cm gap at the top of your liquid to allow for fermentation | Cover the jar with a cloth and fasten with an elastic band | Leave to ferment for 6-9 days at room temperature | It's then ready for the 'secondary fermentation'

process | Remove the scoby and add additional flavour if desired | Store in an airtight bottle with at least a 3cm gap at the top | Leave at room temperature for between 5-14 days

What flavours can I add to my Kombucha?

This is completely dependent on your taste preferences, but some of the recommended flavour ideas include;

Berries or citrus fruits
Dried fruits such as goji berries, figs or dates
Frozen fruit
Herbs such as lavender, mint or lemon balm
Mild spices like turmeric, allspice or cardamom

What are the health benefits?

Kombucha has the ability to:

Improve your digestion
Strengthen your immune system
Reduce blood pressure
Alleviate gout and haemorrhoids
Improve liver function
Fight cancer



HEALTH & FITNESS



TIME

on your side

HOW LIVING LONGER MAY BE AS SIMPLE
AS EXERCISING FOR 30 MINUTES PER DAY

We all know the secret to long life is health, well-being and happiness, and scientists believe that as well as human interaction and diet, our inclination to exercise can have a direct bearing on our mental and physical welfare.

New research from Copenhagen suggests the key to extending our lives beyond the average – 79 for a man and 83 for a woman – could be the simple action of exercising for 30 minutes each day. Not only that, but the results were actually better than for those who had worked out for 60 minutes.

Here are six key benefits that are only a run, walk, cycle, swim, game or gym session away:

ONE – The heart. Exercise helps to ward off the threat of stroke, cardiovascular disease and complications borne out of diabetes.

TWO – Weight loss. We know the value of keeping mobile, active, and preventing the build-up of fat, and a 30-minute workout each day will achieve that.

THREE – Stress. Getting sweaty is the perfect way to blow a breeze through worry, anxiety and the mental tension that shortens lives.

FOUR – Energy. It sounds strange, but rather than sending us to sleep, exercise will boost alertness by delivering oxygen, nutrients and activation chemicals around the body.

FIVE – Self-confidence. ‘Exercise is sanity’, as the saying goes. In building confidence and offering a dynamic sense of achievement, that half-hour investment can take you to a whole new level of belief.

SIX – Clarity. Exercise transports us to a place where our minds can flush away the stresses of everyday life, where we can step back and see problems in a whole new light, all the while working on new ways to tackle them.



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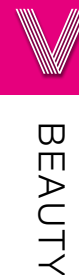
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HOW TO SLOW HAIR LOSS WITHOUT OVERLY EXPENSIVE TREATMENTS

Men beware, there is an enemy in our midst and, for many of us, its presence is already being felt. It resides not on the dark web, nor in damp alleyways - instead, it lives in the follicles of your hair... at least, that's if you've got any of the damn stuff left.

Since the dawn of time, hair loss in men has been an inevitable by-product of getting older. Hair leaves the scalp and instead migrates downwards to emerge out of ears and nostrils. Yet with follicle technology having never been better, and putting to one side the cheats' method of a full-on hair transplant, consider the following inexpensive treatments that, while not solving hair loss, can certainly slow it:

Shampoos

Shampooing can be harsh on hair follicles, yet using a specialised formula (such as Davines' energizing shampoo) can stimulate the scalp, while hirs shampoo's DHT-reducing product reduces the rate at which hair falls out. Consider as well protein- and caffeine-heavy products for the shower.

Diet

A diet rich in oils, proteins and nutrients will send positive elements to the places your body needs them most. Consider too that smoking and alcohol consumption restricts the blood vessels, thereby reducing blood flow and circulation to the follicles.

Vitamin D

The *Journal of Dermatology* reported that people with alopecia are usually deficient in vitamin D, leading to the theory that the vitamin can help hair reset its growth phase.

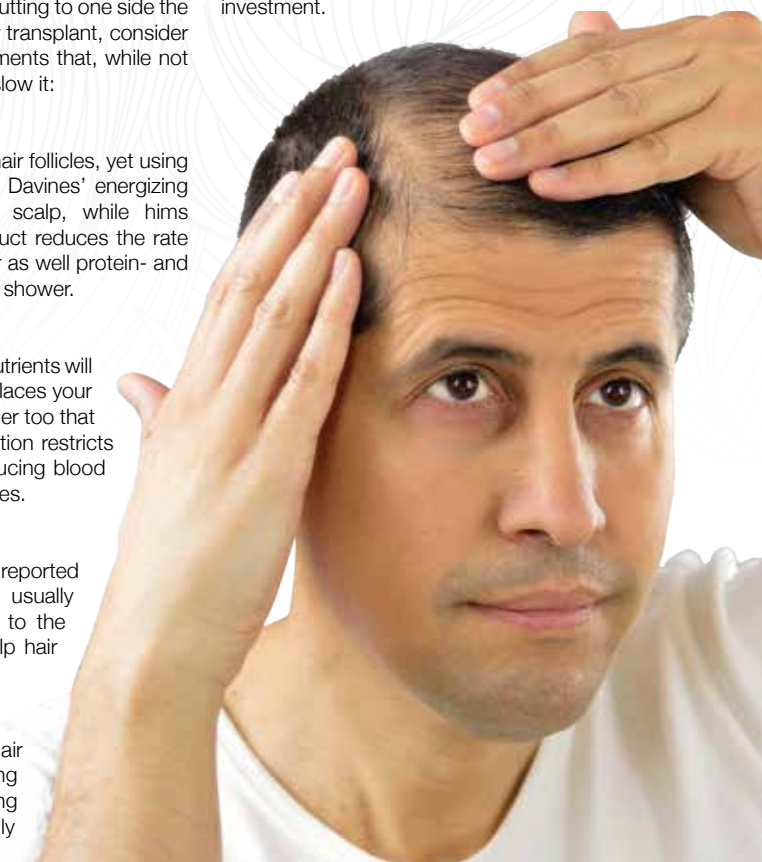
Stress

Stress is a known cause of hair loss, so cutting stress, boosting exercise and even practising meditation can improve not only

your hair retention but physical well-being in other parts of the body too.

Prescribed formulas

From over-the-counter formulas (the most common in the UK being Regaine) to platelet-rich plasma (PRP) treatment, which injects centrifuged blood back into the scalp at around £1,000 a go, speaking to a health professional about regrowth for follicles that are dormant, not dead, could be a worthwhile investment.



WHAT IS AI BEAUTY?

IS AI BEAUTY THE FACE OF THE FUTURE?

AI, or artificial intelligence, is already an integral part of our daily lives, with many people utilising smart technologies such as Siri or chatbots; so, of course, the beauty industry is also getting in on the action.

WHAT IS AI?

To put it simply, AI is a computer system that imitates intellectual human behaviours; basically, you provide your personal information and then the computer uses an algorithm to provide you with the service, product or solution that you need.

Sometimes, it can predict your needs before you even know about them yourself.

HOW IS AI BEING USED IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY?

1. A BESPOKE SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

The beauty industry is completely over-saturated with products, which can make the buying process difficult. However, by completing a simple questionnaire before you shop, AI can provide you with a tailored number of products that suit your individual beauty needs. A certain make-up brand even has a custom-made foundation machine that promises to find your exact match.

2. A PERSONALISED BEAUTY ROUTINE

If you have ever worried that you are applying your foundation wrongly or that you are missing parts of your face when applying creams, then AI can help you. There are now beauty tools available that use AI to let you know how to improve your make-up and skincare routine, such as a facial cleansing brush that uses skin sensors to analyse your skin.

3. MORE RELEVANT PRODUCTS

If you sometimes feel that the beauty industry is just churning out more and more products to make money, then AI could signal the end of this. AI can utilise customer data to help strategically create products that are actually in demand, rather than marketers just guessing what we want.



Thank your parents for your hair loss

Is your hair receding or are you thinning on top? Are you worried about the amount of hair that you are finding in your hairbrush, down your plug hole, or on your pillow?

The main reason for hair loss is genetics – yes, you heard me right – if your parents had problems with their hair falling then there is a very good chance of you experiencing the same.

I am one of five brothers with a father who was bald since the day I could remember and sure enough we all started to lose our hair in our mid-20s. I thought to myself – I don't want to be bald, it made me feel older and more self-conscious. There must be something that can be done.

So, I spent a lot of time researching the science behind hair loss, trying to understand the impact that chemicals in the body had on the hair follicle (commonly known as DHT) and tried to identify natural treatments and ingredients that could be used to help block and counteract hair loss.

With the knowledge and experience I gained I teamed up with some of the best hair specialists in the business to create The Regrow Hair Centre.

The Regrow Hair Centre specialises in surgical and non-surgical treatments to help stop hair loss and restore hair. We use and offer the finest products available on the market which are 100% safe and natural.

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Contact us for a free consultation with no obligations. Let us see what we can do to help.

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Lawrence Austin,
Managing Director,
The Regrow Hair
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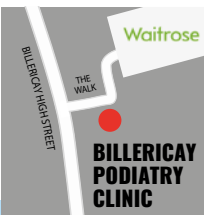
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Timeless DENIM

*Trends will come and go...
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V
FASHION

Here are just a few staple denim pieces that men and women should have in their wardrobes, safe in the knowledge that they will never go out of style...

THE DENIM JACKET

As practical as it is en vogue, the denim jacket will never fail you. Women, make a floral spring/summer dress edgier by teaming it with a light denim jacket. For a more casual aesthetic, go for distressed denim. For a rock chick vibe, stud detailing will be your best friend.

Men, relive the early noughties and brave the double denim like Justin Timberlake and Britney Spears at the 2001 AMAs. Alternatively, wear a dark-coloured denim jacket over a casual white shirt and chinos for a subtle nod to the trend.

SLIM AND SKINNY JEANS

Slim and skinny jeans aren't going anywhere.

Ladies, jeans and a blouse teamed with a chic

blazer and an oversized tote is a perfect smart/casual look that will take you from office to cocktail bar with ease. Mix things up by opting for white denim during the warmer months.

And gents, dark-coloured jeans with a shirt in a bold hue – the more daring, the better – complete with your favourite loafers, are great for standing out from the crowd. Team with a crisp white shirt and a sharp blazer for a smarter aesthetic.

BOYFRIEND JEANS

Slim fit jeans are in, but that doesn't mean their comfier and more voluminous cousins are out. Au contraire, boyfriend jeans are hotter than ever, and can be enjoyed by men and women alike. Sometimes, if you're lucky, the very same pair.

Girls, make like an off-duty supermodel and pair yours with simple tank tops, trainers and oversized sunglasses. Timberlands, flip-flops, wedges and even sky-scraping heels are all approved footwear choices.

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BRICKS & MORTAR

TO LET

FOR SALE

BUSINESS & PROPERTY

What is the difference between buy-to-let and residential mortgages?

The buy-to-let mortgage revolution was one that the housing market constructed with all the speed and eagerness of a stunning detached property. It was perfectly situated (in a marketplace where rental prices were going through the roof), and as for the views, well, buy-to-let landlords could sit back for years, do very little, and watch their profits roll in.

At their peak in 2007, buy-to-let mortgage approvals hit 183,000, but increased taxes brought in by George Osborne in 2015 – amid fears buy-to-let mortgages were pushing property prices through the roof – have cut that figure back to around the 75,000 mark.

So while the trend of buying to immediately let out to tenants has waned, it should be noted that it's still an industry worth almost £250 billion a year... or, put another way, 3,800 mortgages are approved every month.

The key difference between a buy-to-let mortgage

and a residential mortgage is that, with the latter, you will live in the property yourself, rather than simply using it as an investment whereby tenants arrive from day one. As a result, with a buy-to-let mortgage, interest rates and fees tend to be much higher, while purchasers have to stump up a deposit of around 25 per cent (and sometimes as high as 40 per cent).

In addition, buy-to-let mortgages are often interest only, meaning landlords no longer profit from the likely uplift in value of a property. Naturally, with a residential repayment mortgage, an owner can walk away with sizeable equity should the market improve.

With a number of other tax changes – such as increased stamp duty on buy-to-lets, removal of a 10 per cent income tax saving owing to 'wear and tear', and an ability to offset interest paid on their own mortgage from the rental income declared to the taxman removed – the market for buy-to-let deals has become much tougher, matched with residential mortgages enjoying a three-year high last year.

TONE UP YOUR FINANCES IN 2020

RECONNECT WITH YOUR GOALS

Whatever life stage you've reached, you'll no doubt have some short and long-term financial goals you want to achieve, such as moving to a new home, saving for a child's education, or retirement planning. Reviewing these goals and determining the amount of money required to fulfil them is a good discipline and putting you in better stead of ultimately achieving them.

PRIORITISING YOUR PENSION

The earlier you start saving into your pension, the more you can contribute and the longer your money has time to grow. With tax relief available on contributions (within limits), pension saving is one of the best ways to ensure you stay on track for a comfortable retirement.

TAX-EFFICIENT SAVING

As the tax year end approaches, you still have time to use your annual ISA allowance, giving you even more opportunity to build up your savings tax-efficiently.

REVISIT YOUR MORTGAGE

If it's been a while since you took out your existing mortgage, there could be a more suitable deal for you which could potentially enable you to deflect money into your pension or savings.

REVIEW PROTECTION POLICIES

Life insurance and other types of protection, such as income protection or critical illness cover, should form a vital part of your financial plan. It's worth reviewing these policies as your circumstances change, to ensure you have the right type and level of cover in place.

KEEP TALKING

As part of the service at HCR, we take the time to understand our clients' 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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ADVERTISING IS

an investment ...not a cost

Sir Richard Branson always hoped 1994 would be a big one for his business. In the autumn of that year, the billionaire Brit entrepreneur launched his most brazen attempt at global domination: the release of his Virgin Cola brand.

In some ways, seeing Branson go up against the world's biggest drinks brand was the perfect boxing match. Not only did both companies personify their brand with the use of a posturing guy sporting a big, white, bushy beard, but the marketing ploy of Coca-Cola – to entrench a simple fizzy drink deep into the psyche of a global marketplace of customers – was very much from the Virgin chief's same school of thought.

What Coca-Cola mastered was the concept of subliminal advertising and low-level marketing. Consider the fact that, as customers, we're bombarded

with all manner of advertising messages – brands are desperate to hold our attention, and for the most part they do it very well. And yet, researchers have found that, in many cases, the most effective campaigns are the subconscious ones we don't even notice going on around us. That's why even a colossal brand leader such as Coca-Cola will spend £6billion globally on advertising each year.

Forget the showpiece ads, big promotions and special offers – we're talking about discreet in-store branding or billboards, simple page advertising, advertorials and TV activity with barely a bottle or a bubble in sight.

These adverts don't actually appear to be selling anything specific, yet they're embedding in our minds repetition and strengthening brand identity. That theoretical 'strength' translates into a level of comfort, familiarity and trust it's difficult to put a price on.

Branson knew this, and although he couldn't topple the world's biggest drinks company, his smorgasbord of Virgin brands – from gyms to holidays, financial services to internet connectivity – each involuntarily strengthened the others, which continues to today.

Our finest business brain saw advertising as an investment in the future, not a cost in the present... and these days he's toasting with something considerably stronger than cola.

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KIDS

BANISH BEDTIME BLUES

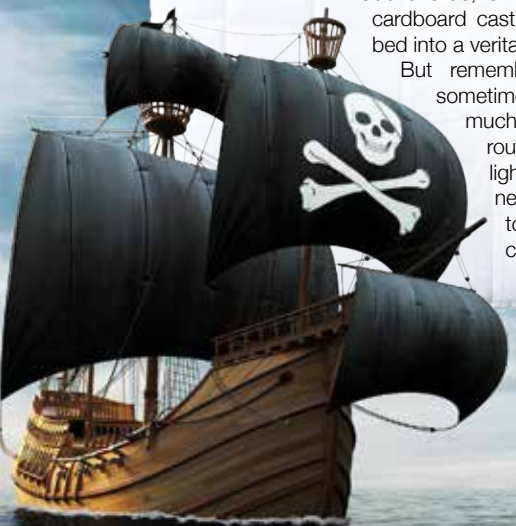
If your little one's bedtime routine has become a living nightmare, consider sprucing up their bed so they'll never want to get out of it

Every parent knows the perils of bedtime. The repeated calls to get pyjamas on, the never-ending stories, followed by the midnight excursions into your room which usually result in no one getting a decent night's kip. The trouble is, kids never want the fun to end, which is why turning their regular bed into a themed one could be a great way to make bedtime the final exciting event to end every day.

Deciding on your design and theme is really down to space, money and your little one's personal taste. And really, there is no need to spend a fortune when children have such vibrant imaginations. One of the cheapest and most obvious alterations is to attach wheels and a toy steering wheel to a basic wooden frame. Add a lick of red paint and you've got a racing car bed – licence not required! You can also erect a tent over the bed – because what child wouldn't want to pretend they were camping every night? Or perhaps a sail to transform it into a pirate ship?

If your little one is lucky enough to have a midsleeper (higher than a regular bed with the space underneath usually housing storage or a desk) you can afford to get really creative. You could add a slide, or even build a playhouse or cardboard castle, converting a boring old bed into a veritable playground.

But remember that, with kids, you sometimes don't need to do very much to bring magic to a dull routine. Just adding some fairy lights, glow stars or some cool new bedding can be enough to get them leaping under the covers, every single night.



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DO THE RUMBA

How this spirit went from being the preferred bounty of pirates to a premium tippie...

When Christopher Columbus introduced the Americas to sugar cane, he couldn't have possibly realised his actions would one day lead to the creation of one of the finest drinks around: rum.

Like many revelations, the discovery of rum was a happy accident, which occurred when sugar planters in the 17th century grew frustrated at the waste product of sugar: molasses. At a loss with what to do with the thick, syrupy liquid, any molasses they couldn't give away was simply discarded, until some bright spark discovered that by mixing the molasses with water and leaving to ferment in the sun, they created a spirit – rum!

Early rum wasn't the smooth and delectable beverage we quaff these days, of course. It was strong, unsophisticated and a great cure-all for the many ills that befell those living in the tropics; probably why it was nicknamed rumbullion or kill-devil.

And yet, despite rum's more acerbic qualities, it soon became popular as plantation owners sold it at discounted prices to local naval ships, knowing that their presence in the area would discourage pirates. For as we well know, no one loves rum as much as pirates...

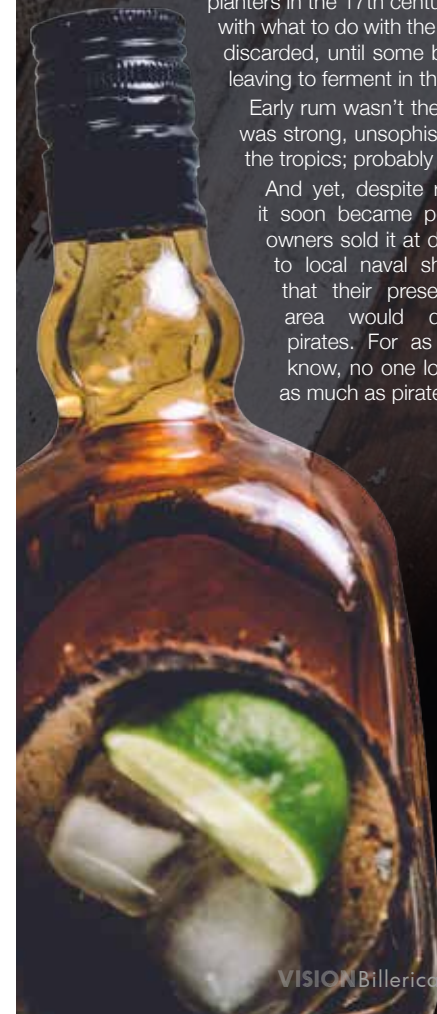


The glorious golden spirit continued to garner popularity, to the extent that the British Navy couldn't go without it, and in the 1730s they adopted a daily ration of half a pint of 160 proof rum, which remained (though to a diminished strength) until 1969.

These days, rum is a billion-pound industry, and there are many wonderful brands that you can happily sip neat with just an ice cube or two. So next time you're relaxing with a finger of the finest, remember to raise a toast to the sugar planters who finally figured out why you should never EVER throw molasses away. Cheers, me hearties.



FOOD & DRINK





Whether you want to save time in the kitchen, don't always have the necessary cooking appliances to create your favourite dishes or simply love a good hack, these four unusual tips will ensure you never look at cooking in the same way again.

Use dental floss to cut

Sometimes, cutting with a knife can be tricky, especially if the food you are attempting to chop up is either very soft or prone to crumbling. Dental floss is a great tool for cutting foods such as a cake or a very mature cheddar, providing more precision and less mess than a knife.

Use cling film pouches to poach eggs

Eggs are an easy and filling snack or meal; however, poaching the perfect egg can be a challenge. Avoid your eggs disintegrating by lining a cup with cling film, spraying with olive oil and cracking in an egg. Then tie it closed, drop it into simmering water and cook as normal.

Place an ice cube in your burgers

Do you often worry about serving dry burgers at your BBQs? A simple trick is to press a small ice cube into the middle of your burger patty before cooking, sealing the beef around it and then grilling or frying as usual. The result? A moist and juicy burger that no one will suspect has had an ice cube in it.

Cook chicken in glass jar

If you do not have a grill pan but have a craving for tender chicken kebabs, this hack is for you. Simply place your kebabs (on a wooden skewer) in a glass jar, cover with tin foil and cook in the oven until the chicken juices run clear.



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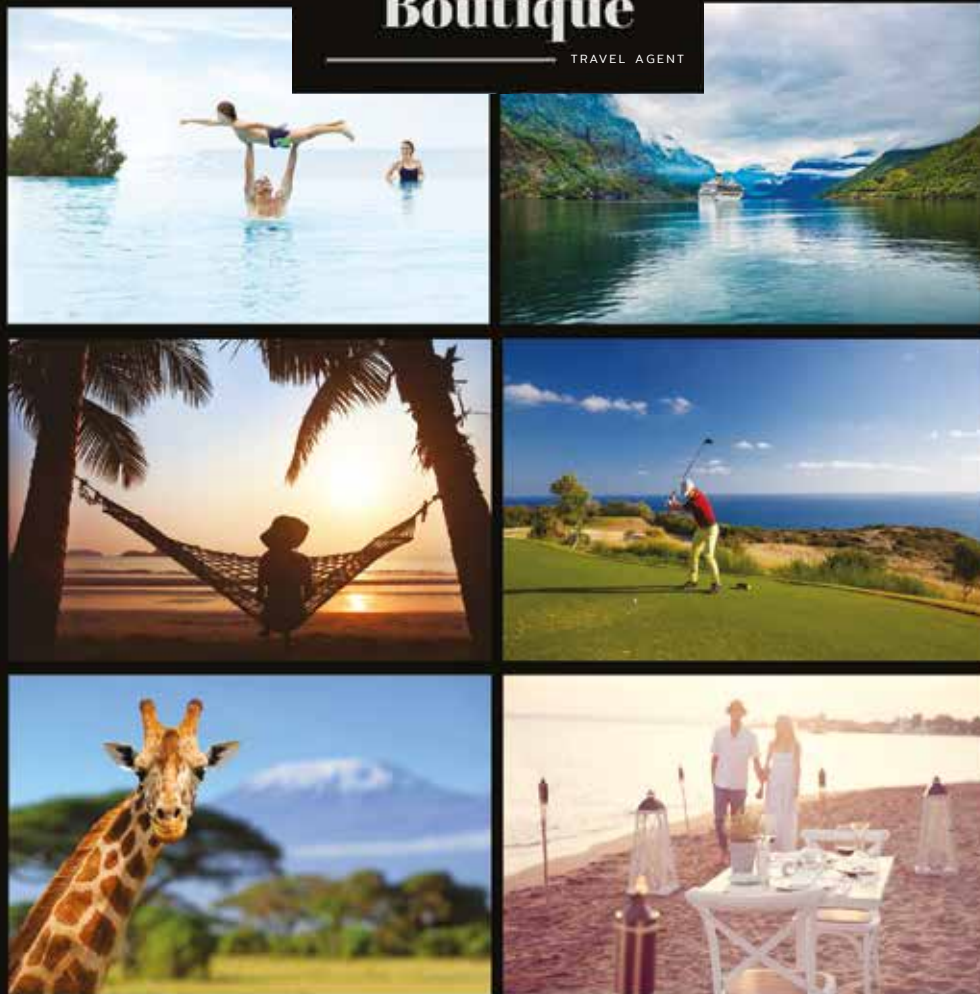
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SEARCH

THE MISTAKES PEOPLE MAKE WHEN BOOKING FLIGHTS

Holiday fever... whether it's packing your case at home, arriving at the airport or stepping out onto foreign soil at the other end, vacation vivaciousness hits all of us at some point, and nothing else in the world matters.

And yet, what if you could wind back a few months to when you booked that flight and mend that badly timed departure you booked, or erase the hassles and inconveniences of connections, or just save a big wedge of cash? Here are five things you need to consider when booking flights:

to book is around a month before. Buy flights too early or too late and airlines will be charging either uncompetitively or, worse still, at a premium.

WEEKEND WOE

Don't book flights at weekends when everyone else is online. The best new deals hit sites early in the week, and prices generally hold up better during the daytime than in the evening.

DAYTIME DALLIANCES

It may be convenient to have a bit of breakfast then saunter to the airport, but the best-priced flights are those very early in the morning. Getting a 5am plane out will also mean more time at your chosen destination, even if you do spend the rest of the day yawning.

CHEAP = CHEERFUL?

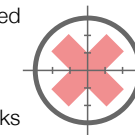
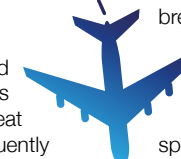
Sometimes the cheapest fare will actually end up costing you more. A number of airlines offer a basic ticket with no luggage, no seat reservation and no frills. You may subsequently discover you're paying extra to check baggage in, or are adding cost at check-in to sit next to a loved one.

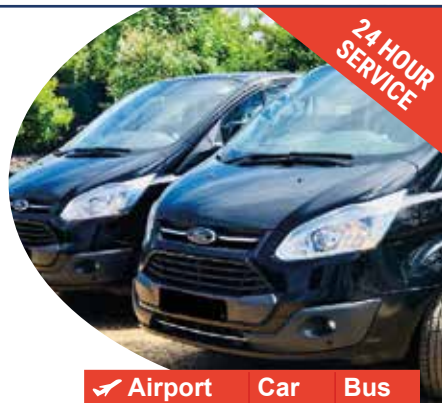
FORTNIGHT FORETHOUGHT

Airfares start increasing sharply in the two weeks leading up to departure, and typically the best time

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TOKYO 2020

THE NEW SPORTS



SPORT

2. SOFTBALL

In the latest instalment showcasing sports set to debut or return at the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo later this year, we take a look at softball.

Five new pursuits have been added to the roster for Tokyo 2020, which kicks off on July 24. It will be the second time that the Far Eastern metropolis has hosted the Summer Olympiad... it would have been the third had the Second World War not intervened in 1940.

Softball, in essence, is a sport very much like baseball, and there will be six countries competing for the gold medal.

Last seen at the Olympics in Beijing 2008, the qualification process for Tokyo saw 2018 WBSC Softball World Champions United States, Europe/Africa winners Italy, Americas victors Mexico, and Australia as the Oceania representatives. Canada

qualified along with Mexico, while Japan is present as host.

Softball has seven innings, two fewer than

baseball, a bigger ball measuring two inches more in circumference, and a smaller bat. The pitch is also smaller than its compatriot and the pitching distance of softball is around 40ft from the plate, as opposed to 60ft in baseball. Also, whereas the ball is pitched overarm in baseball, an underhand technique is used in softball.

Returning after a hiatus of 12 years, following its removal for the 2012 Games in London, it was previously part of the programme between Atlanta 1996 and Beijing 2008.

The six countries will compete with a roster of 15 players each, with the 90 athletes helping to make up the estimated 11,091 who will compete in Tokyo.

Softball was invented in the late 19th century in Chicago as a game designed to move at a faster pace than baseball. Contrary to common knowledge, since the 1930s, the "soft" ball is actually hard... spectators beware.



DEALS ON WHEELS?



THE TOP 10 MOST EXPENSIVE **CARS** IN THE WORLD REVEALED



TEN - £910,000 - Zenvo ST1

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NINE - £1.1million - Ferrari LaFerrari

With 0-60mph in less than three seconds and on to 124mph in seven seconds, there aren't many quicker in acceleration.



EIGHT - £1.2million - Pagani Huayra

Its unusual name celebrates the Incan god of wind. Unlike that god, it possesses a 6.0 litre V12 engine with two turbochargers for 620bhp.



SEVEN - £1.3million - Aston Martin One-77

When James Bond wants to get away from or catch up with the bad guys, he should use this - 220mph top speed, 0-60 in 3.5 seconds from a 7.3 litre V12.



SIX - £1.5million - Koenigsegg One:1

This is a Swedish megacar that looks more like a diecast model! It's low and wide and can do 0-60mph in less than 2.9 seconds, with a top speed of 280mph.



FIVE - £1.9million - Ferrari F60 America

A stylish and classic look and bodywork, it's brutal along with its beauty - the perfect combination for a supercar. A 6.2 litre V12 gives 740 bhp and 0-60 in 3.1 seconds.



FOUR - £2.6million - Mansory Vivere Bugatti Veyron

At last, we can hear you say - a Bugatti! Well, this one is a beast. An 8.0 litre engine, a top speed of 255mph and 0-60 in less than 2.5 seconds.



THREE - £2.6million - W Motors Lykan Hypersport

This car appeared in *Furious 7* where it displayed its tremendous capacity and animal-like qualities. 0-60 in less than 2.8 seconds; a top speed of 245mph.



TWO - £3.4million - Lamborghini Veneno

Possibly the most amazing-looking vehicle ever made, with a top speed of 221mph, and 0-60 in 2.8 seconds.



ONE - £3.7million - Koenigsegg CCXR Trevita

The 1,004 bhp, 0-60 in 2.9 seconds and top speed of 254mph mean it's a shame there were only three of these ever made.

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WHAT'S ON

in your area

Brentwood Wine Society

Shenfield Parish Hall, 60 Hutton Road,
Shenfield, 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.

If you would like to come along in the first instance for a free tasting, email enquiries@brentwoodwinesociety.co.uk

Charity Lunch

**Billericay Methodist Church, Western Road,
Billericay, CM12 9DT**
February 8, 12.30pm – 1.30pm

A snack lunch and drink for £4.50. This month we are supporting young people attending the European Jamboree in Poland this year.

Quiz Night

**Shenfield Parish Hall, 60 Hutton Road,
Shenfield, Brentwood, CM15 8LB**
February 8, 7.30pm – 10pm

Funds raised support Essex Wildlife Trust conservation work.

Bring own drinks and nibbles. Suggested donation of £8 per person. Advance booking essential.

Call 01245 420188 or email johnmclaughlin50@btinternet.com to book.

Billericay Community Choir

**Christ Church, Perry Street, Billericay,
CM12 0NX**

February 15, 7.30pm (doors from 7pm)

Billericay Community Choir presents *True Love*

Ways, a selection of enjoyable, familiar Valentine songs in concert.

Musical direction is by Deborah Allen Morgan, with Michael Silk as piano accompanist.

Admission is free and refreshments provided.

Donations are welcome for the Memory Café (Billericay Alzheimer's support group).

Visit www.billericaycommunitychoir.com or email billericaycommunitychoir@gmail.com for more information.

Remus Horse Sanctuary Induction Day

**Remus Memorial Horse Sanctuary, Little Farm,
Buttsbury, Near Ingatestone, CM4 9NZ**
February 16, 11am – 1pm

Remus Horse Sanctuary is actively seeking adult volunteers to join the existing and dedicated team. No experience is needed.

Everyone must complete and submit an application form in advance, which can be obtained from the Sanctuary or downloaded from www.remussanctuary.org/what-we-do/useful-downloads

The induction will give people an insight into the issues that Remus faces and the support needed, including relevant health and safety information.

For further information, visit www.remussanctuary.org or contact Sue Burton on 01277 356191.

Trevor Francis Live

**The Dragon Shenfield, Shenfield Road,
Brentwood, CM15 8EZ**
February 22, 9pm

Trevor Francis from *The Voice UK* will be performing live. He'll sing soul and reggae classics all night at The Dragon in Shenfield.



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Cosmetic Surgery

Thursday 27 February 2020

From 6:30pm with Mr Venkat Ramakrishnan and Miss Mary Morgan, Consultant Plastic Surgeons.

Thursday 19 March 2020

From 6:30pm with Ms Kallirroi Tzafetta, Consultant Plastic Surgeon.

Cataract Surgery

Tuesday 24 March 2020

At 6:30pm with Mr Niaz Islam, Consultant Ophthalmic Surgeon.

Haemorrhoids

Thursday 26 March 2020

From 6:30pm with Mr Veerana Shatkar, Consultant General Surgeon.

Weight Loss Surgery

Thursday 26 March 2020

At 6:30pm with Mr Sanjay Agrawal, Consultant Bariatric Surgeon.

Knee Surgery

Wednesday 1 April 2020

At 6:30pm with Prof Kevin Cheah, Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon and Mr Jesse Holloway, Physiotherapist.

Children's Ear, Nose and Throat Disorders

Monday 20 April 2020

At 6:30pm with Mr Anurag Jain, Consultant ENT Surgeon.

Women's Health – Menopause and HRT

Wednesday 22 April 2020

At 6:30pm with Miss Seema Bagtharia, Consultant Gynaecologist and Mrs Linda Griffin, Men's and Women's Health Physiotherapist.

To book your place or find out more, go to
nuffieldhealth.com/book or call 01277 554181

*Time frames indicated may vary depending on choice of consultant, type of diagnostic investigation, and procedure package. A referral may be required before a consultation or diagnostics. ^Interest-free loans are subject to status and provided by our medical finance partner.

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