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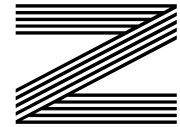
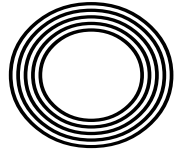
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Editor's notes...

DECEMBER 2022



Nik Allen, Editor

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

What a difference a year makes. This time last year, we still had the threat of lockdowns looming.

Thankfully, this year feels much more normal - apart from a World Cup with the Christmas decorations up, which certainly feels odd.

I think the past two years have made us robust as a nation, and if we haven't been a fan of change previously, we have certainly been forced to be flexible in recent times.

This Christmas, try to spend your money locally, rather than buying from the bigwigs. Every pound you spend locally will make a difference to a local business.

Personally, I love this time of year, especially since I've had kids. Now they're getting a bit older, the magic reflected on their faces makes it all worthwhile.

I wish a very merry Christmas to all our readers and advertisers, and here's to a successful 2023.

In this month's edition our cover star is Peter Kay who has announced his first tour in 12 years. He is also the first artist in the world to perform a monthly residency at the O2 Arena in London.

Nik Allen

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At the time of print all content in **VISION** was relevant and up to date according to COVID-19 government guidelines

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WHIPPING UP A STORMZY

Stormzy's appeal is widespread – a musician, a fashion icon, a fulcrum for equality in what is a complicated social landscape, and the first grime artist to headline Glastonbury. With a new album out, the rap star – real name Michael Ebenezer Kwadjo Omari Owuo Jr – explains that his journey to greatness is no accident, but the result of sheer determination and hard work.

Stormzy will never be everyone's cup of tea. His music is genre-splitting but ultimately relies on a listener's ear for rap, grime and dubstep-infused combinations. Meanwhile, his politics often lean on diversity, equality and race, leading to an unapologetic prevalence of support for Black artists, musicians and students.

Yet whether you respect the 29-year-old Croydon native for his take on music and life or not, the fact he has battled back from depression, and is vocal in promoting good habits and good actions as methods for combating the mental and psychological ills of modern society, mean he deserves the stage he finds himself on.

Stormzy also possesses the humility to talk about the wider elements that influence his music, rather than simply pushing the marketing button for *This Is What I Mean*, his third studio album.

"Nothing would be possible without having a clear head and knowing what it is we have to do in this world to survive," he begins. "I realised a long time ago that exercise was the only mechanism that would truly keep me straight, and that's why so much of my focus is on building physical and mental strength.

"When you put on muscle, people are quick to label you as someone who wants to pose or show off, but it's nothing like that for me. Strength is just a by-product of a fitness regime that keeps my brain, my head, in the right place.

"If I didn't do it, some days I don't think I'd be able to cope."

Pushing his own vulnerability at potentially falling back into "the darkness" is an interesting slant, particularly in a music genre where confidence and bravado play such a big role in the promotion game. Yet while the rapper does accept imperfections in his armour, Stormzy is never less than 100 per cent driven to achieve.

"I find it strange and uncomfortable to aim for anything less than the greatest," he offers, with typical bravado. "That doesn't even make sense for me, that.

"If I was going to be an engineer or I was going to be a baker, or I was going to be a fireman, why would I not aim to eventually be the greatest at my job?

"I've never understood why I should just try to be the best rapper in London, or even the best rapper in the UK. I don't want to be the best rapper in the UK. I want to be the best artist in the UK."

Stormzy's new album will doubtless take him another step closer to his goal. It is a collection of 12 tracks revolving around race, love, fame, influence and contentment. "All our experiences get us to a certain place, and right now this is where I am," he says. "It feels right to be putting this record out – it feels good."



Photo credit: Tracey Welch/Shutterstock



Blind Ambition

CELEBRATING INFLUENTIAL BROADCASTER AND BLOGGER LUCY EDWARDS

There's not a teenager out there who hasn't had to overcome setbacks – disappointing A Level results, the pain of unrequited love, and more.

For Lucy Edwards, the pain was rather longer lasting. When she was 17 years old, a life-changing operation designed to cure a rare genetic condition called incontinentia pigmenti turned out to be the most temporary and painful of reprieves. Lucy's sight returned to its fullest state, yet for a brief and tormenting four hours only.

Now aged 24, Lucy's sight has deteriorated to the point where she is holding on to the very last bits of light perception. However, she refuses to buckle under the pain of missed experiences or opportunities.

Instead, by "owning" the condition, she has styled for herself a career at the BBC – she was Radio 1's first-ever blind presenter, and is a notable fashion and style blogger/vlogger, with more than 650,000 YouTube and 150,000 Instagram followers. She regularly posts under the #blindnotbroken hashtag and has also published a book, *The Blind Beauty Guide*.

In everything she does, Lucy looks to give hope and encouragement to countless others looking to get their life ambitions back on track following disability setbacks.

"It is the trauma that drives me forward," she says. "I thought I should be open about my feelings because this brings about change. If I didn't share my life online, I don't think others would be as knowledgeable about blindness.

"It is important to show that anyone can do anything if they want to."

An important element of that is a new perception of beauty. For Lucy, her beauty routine is a holistic exercise that doesn't just rely on visuals. It's about taking time for herself, relaxing and unwinding with candles, music and aromas.

She adds: "As a blind person, these are things that mean so much to me."



Photo credit: lucyedwards.com, BBC, Twitter @lucyedwards

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HOME & DIY

HOW TO *untangle* CHRISTMAS LIGHTS

Decorating your home for Christmas should be a joyous occasion but, if your Christmas lights are a tangled mess, this task can quickly turn into a full-on stressfest.

STEP 1: Get in a positive frame of mind

If you are already feeling frazzled and frustrated, then things are only going to get worse when you start trying to untangle your lights. Therefore, you need to make sure you are feeling relaxed and in the right frame of mind. Pop on some festive songs, pour yourself your favourite festive drink and take a few deep breaths before you begin.

STEP 2: Make sure you have enough space

You need to make sure you have sufficient space to lay your lights out on a flat surface, such as on the floor or across a large table.

STEP 3: Start with the plug

Always start with the plug when untangling your Christmas lights. Once located, gently work the plug through the knots. Be careful not to pull too hard as this may damage the lights.

STEP 4: Use a pencil or pen

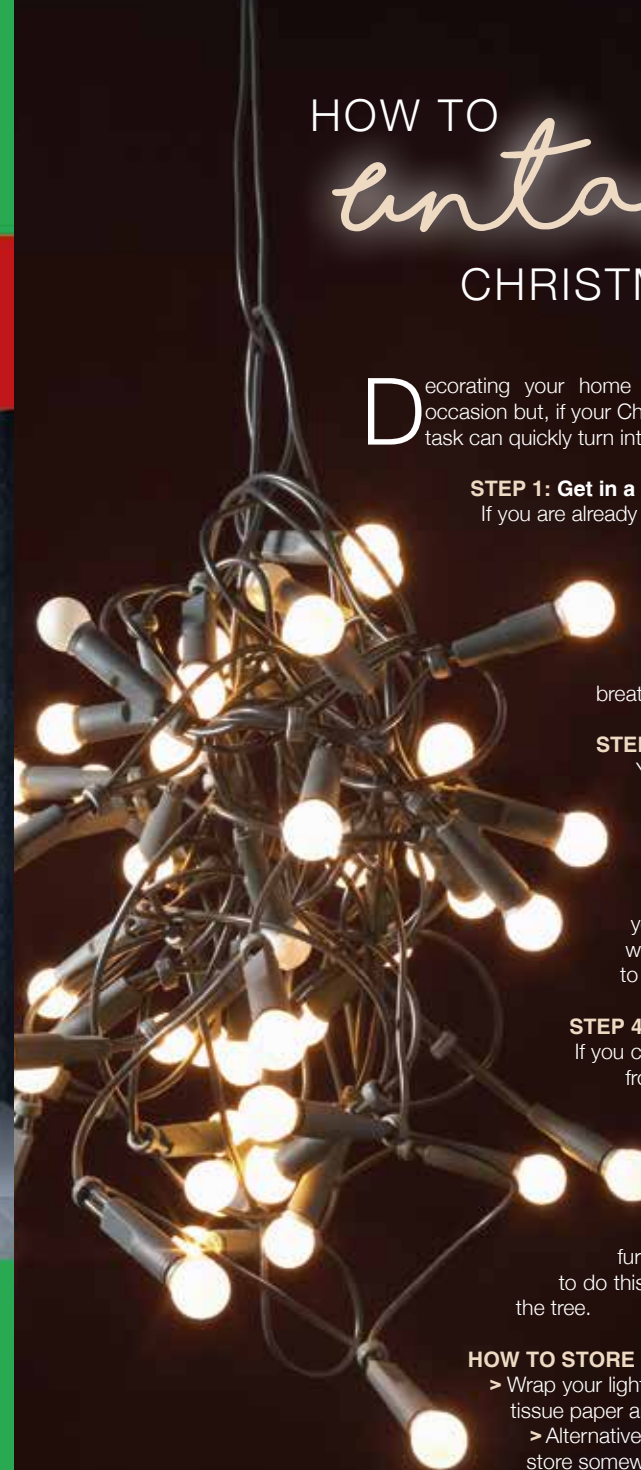
If you come across any knots that are preventing you from unravelling your lights, gently use a pencil or pen to tease them out.

STEP 5: Keep your lights in a straight line

As you untangle your lights, make sure you keep them in a straight line to prevent further knots. It can be beneficial to enlist a helper to do this with you and to help you hang your lights on the tree.

HOW TO STORE YOUR LIGHTS TO PREVENT TANGLING:

- > Wrap your lights around a piece of cardboard and then wrap tissue paper around them to prevent damage.
- > Alternatively, wrap them around a wire coat hanger and store somewhere safe.





DULUX COLOUR OF THE YEAR 2023

Wild Wonder



For the past two decades, the design experts at Dulux have been translating global insights into their Colour of the Year, and the chosen shade for 2023 has been revealed as Wild Wonder. A warm and fairly neutral colour, there are many ways that you can incorporate Wild Wonder into your home in the new year.

- created four colour palettes to support it:
- > Lush – soothing forest tones
 - > Buzz – vibrant shades that celebrate the biodiversity of a wildflower field
 - > Raw – a warm and enriching palette that embodies nature
 - > Flow – shades to bring balance to your home

WHAT IS WILD WONDER?

Wild Wonder is a mix between green and mustard yellow, and is a great choice for those who prefer warmer and more neutral shades in their home. Dulux says that this colour was created to “capture the wonders of the Earth” and hopes that it will “inspire creativity and bring a sense of nature’s magic to your living and working spaces in 2023”.

HOW TO USE WILD WONDER IN YOUR HOME

- > In your bedroom: Pair with other neutral tones such as sage or olive green to transform your bedroom into a restful retreat.
- > In your living room: Team with pastel pinks and blues for a contemporary look that is fun and fresh.
- > In your kitchen: Try using Wild Wonder on your ceiling, your kitchen units or as an accent behind open shelving.
- > In your bathroom: Paint your bathroom walls with Wild Wonder and then add layers of forest hues from the Lush palette in your bathroom accessories.

WHAT COLOUR HUES COMPLEMENT WILD WONDER?

As a colour for your home, Wild Wonder is quite hard to visualise with others, which is why Dulux has



Photo credit: dulux.co.uk

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HOME & DIY

HOW TO DEFROST YOUR FREEZER

A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE TO DEFROSTING AND CLEANING YOUR FREEZER

Can you remember the last time you defrosted your freezer? If not, then it is probably long overdue.

Although it's not one of the most enjoyable tasks, but if you don't defrost your freezer, it won't work as efficiently and will be more prone to faults.

STEP 1: TURN OFF AND UNLOAD

First, turn off your freezer and unplug it from the socket. Then, remove all the food and place it in a cooler to prevent thawing.

STEP 2: DECIDE WHERE THE WATER WILL GO

If your freezer has a drainage hose, then you can place this in a bucket to assist with the drainage process. Alternatively, lay towels or plastic liners on the floor to soak up the water.

STEP 3: ALLOW THE ICE TO MELT

The simplest way to defrost a freezer is to allow the ice to gradually melt on its own. After you have unplugged the appliance, simply leave the door open and wait for the ice to melt.

To speed up this process, you can position a fan near the door so that room-temperature air circulates into the freezer, but make sure to keep it away from any water on the floor. If you don't have a fan, you can use boiling water in pans and place on the shelves, but be careful if there are children or pets around.

STEP 4: MOP UP AND CLEAN

As the ice melts, mop it up with a rag or towel to prevent any damage to your flooring. Once all the ice has melted, you can start to clean the inside of your freezer. Mix one tablespoon of baking soda with four cups of hot water and then apply to the walls, racks and door of your freezer with a cloth. Wipe with a damp cloth to remove any residue.

STEP 5: TURN IT BACK ON AND REFILL

Once your appliance has fully dried, shut the door, turn it back on and then wait for it to reach the required temperature. This typically takes a few hours, but it can vary from one appliance to another.

Lastly, put the food back in. Repeat once a year or more if needed.



Christmas CACTUS

A popular winter flowering houseplant that will make a great addition to your home this festive season and beyond, the Christmas cactus is easy to care for and maintain.

Why choose a Christmas cactus?

You may have already seen Christmas cacti in your local garden centre as they seem to be everywhere at this time of year, and with very good reason. A blooming succulent which is very easy to grow, Christmas cacti boast stunning flowers, and when tended to properly, can live for up to 100 years. They also release oxygen at night instead of throughout the day, which means they can help to improve your quality of sleep.

How to plant a Christmas cactus

Christmas cacti are easily propagated by cutting

a short Y-shaped segment from the stem tips of healthy plant foliage. Plant the segment a quarter of its own length deep in slightly sandy soil and then evenly moisten it. Place the cutting in a well-lit area but not in direct sunlight.

How to pot a Christmas cactus

When choosing a pot for your Christmas cactus, you need one that features a drainage hole at the bottom. This will help to prevent the soil from becoming too wet. Christmas cacti thrive in almost any type of potting mix that is formulated for succulents.

How to care for your Christmas cactus

Unlike other cacti, Christmas cacti are not native to hot and arid environments, which means they require completely different care. This houseplant should be kept in bright but indirect light, with an ideal daytime temperature of around 21 degrees and an evening temperature of 15-18 degrees. Water your Christmas cactus around once every 2-3 weeks, but only when the top one-third of the soil feels dry to the touch.



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY



Girl raises more than £11,000 in funds for charity

An 11-year-old girl from Billericay has raised more than £11,000 for charity through a pop-up shop.

Owing to COVID-19 restrictions, Emily's mum wasn't able to organise her normal Macmillan Coffee Mornings in September 2020, so Emily (pictured above) suggested a pop-up shop on their driveway instead.

Starting in October 2020 and running throughout November, at weekends and after school, Emily raised £2,700 for Macmillan Cancer Support through selling cakes, toys and Christmas cards. The pop-up shop

opened again at Easter 2021 and raised a further £2,700.

Since then, Emily has raised more than £11,000, with the pop-up shop opening once again in October 2022 and raising a further £450.

On their fundraising page, Emily's dad Daniel Bridge wrote: "It meant so much to Emily, but it's meant so much more for Macmillan, the people they care for and the families of those people."

To find out more or to donate, visit www.justgiving.com/fundraising/EmilysPop-upShop

Staff needed ahead of museum's reopening

Billericay museum is looking for a new chair of the board of trustees ahead of its reopening next year.

The Cater Museum, which closed owing to the COVID-19 pandemic, will reopen in spring 2023 thanks to funding from Essex County Council.

Restoration works have been ongoing with the aim of putting the museum, which is dedicated to the

history of the area, back on the map.

Councillor Adam Adsheed, former chairman of The Cater Museum, said: "This is an ideal role for someone with an interest in the town's history and who is looking for an active role in shaping the museum's direction."

To find out more, visit catermuseum.co.uk or email info@catermuseum.co.uk



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Photo credit: Frontier Estates

Plan for dementia care home is approved

A 76-bed specialised dementia care home will be built on Coxes Farm Road, Billericay. Basildon Borough Council (BBC) approved the application by Frontier Estates at a Planning Committee meeting on November 2, despite 69 objections submitted by neighbours and third-party representatives.

older people seriously and approved our application. Our proposed care home in Billericay will be crucial in meeting the rising need for care home bed spaces.

"At present, we have identified a shortfall of 320 spaces within a three-mile radius of the proposal site, so our scheme can certainly make a vital contribution.

"Our care home will deliver a host of significant benefits, including market-leading care services, savings to the taxpayer in reducing social care costs, and creating new jobs during the construction phase and permanently once the care home opens.

"Our scheme is also likely to free up family-sized properties in the local area as the care home residents downsize. As a result, we believe a care home in this brownfield location is the right scheme in the right place."

BBC has been contacted for comment.

BBC's report recommended approving the application owing to the local need for dementia care, despite complaints about its encroachment on the green belt and out-of-character design.

An estimate in the report stated that the number of people living with dementia is set to increase by 30 per cent between 2014 and 2024, and 70 per cent by 2034.

A spokesperson for Frontier Estates said: "We are encouraged that the council has taken the needs of

Pub hosts Remembrance Day charity lunch

The Beauvoir Arms in Billericay hosted a Remembrance Sunday lunch last month, featuring vintage singer Lorraine Cater (pictured right) and raising more than £500 for the Royal British Legion.

The lunch, held on Sunday, November 13, in Downham, Billericay, saw 100 people come and sing along with wartime favourites.

Guests paid £22 for a two-course lunch, with £2 from each booking donated to the British Legion, which supports serving and ex-serving personnel and their families. A raffle was also held to raise more funds.

Venue owner Ashraf Ali said: "It was such a lovely event and great to see so many customers enjoying some nostalgic music and great food. We will be welcoming Lorraine Cater back next year for our VE day event."



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LOCAL NEWS BILLERICAY



Both Blues teams progress in competitions

Billericay Town Ladies earned themselves a Vitality Women's FA Cup second-round tie against AFC Wimbledon after beating King's Lynn Town FC 12-0 on November 13.

Their winning streak in the league continued with away wins over Plymouth Argyle and Maidenhead United, earning their first clean sheet in the FA Women's National League in a 1-0 win over Plymouth Argyle, with Jay Blackie scoring the only goal in the 70th minute.

The latter win, a 5-0 drubbing against Maidenhead United featuring Zoe Rushen scoring a brace, saw the club advance to the second round of the FA Women's

National League Plate.

Meanwhile, Billericay Town men's side progressed to the FA Trophy second round on October 31 after a 3-1 win away to Haringey Borough, with forward John Ufua bagging two goals for the Blues.

Their unbeaten run in the Pitching In Isthmian Football League, which stretched back to the start of September, came to an end away to Kingstonian after two first-half goals consigned them to defeat.

Their next game, a 3-1 defeat at home to Potters Bar Town, saw Bradley Stevenson score a late consolation penalty. The goal ensured their run of scoring in every league game since September continued.

New statues installed for Remembrance Sunday

Two new statues were installed near the Billericay War Memorial as part of the town's Remembrance Day commemorations on November 13.

The statues, called *There But Not There*, were installed for the council free of charge by Tony Andreotti from AJA Property Maintenance Ltd, and remained in place until the end of November.

A Remembrance parade was held in the town centre, starting at the fire station and finishing at the War Memorial where the Remembrance service was held. Veterans and representatives from the military took part and members of the local fire brigade and police were among the crowd.

A social media post by Billericay Town Council said: "It was great to see so many residents at the Remembrance service in Billericay on Sunday. Our vice chairman councillor Martyn Mordecai laid a wreath on behalf of the town council, and two of our youth councillors, Lucy Popham and Freya Ramsay, laid a wreath on behalf of the Billericay Youth Town Council."





LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood

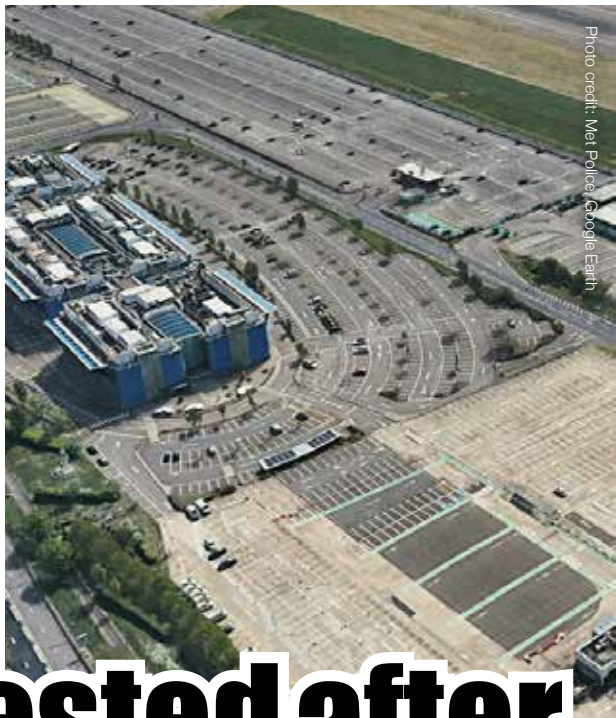


Photo credit: Met Police, Google Earth

Man arrested after stealing cars worth nearly £3m

Four members of an organised crime gang, including a man from Shenfield, have been jailed for a spate of high-end vehicle thefts worth nearly £2.8million.

The suspected ringleader of the group, James Howsen, of Whittington Road, Hutton (pictured left), appeared at Isleworth Crown Court on Friday, November 4, alongside three others.

Howsen admitted conspiracy to steal, dangerous driving, burglary and aggravated vehicle taking. He has been jailed for six years and eight months, and was also banned from driving for six years and four months.

The four gang members were jailed for a combined total of 20 years.

The thefts, many of which took place at Heathrow Airport car park, were committed using a program that created a digital key for cars with keyless technology, enabling the thieves to gain entry and drive off in seconds.

Chief Superintendent Ian Howells, Operational Command Unit Commander for Aviation Policing, said: "This is an excellent example of an extremely thorough and diligent investigation which has resulted in a dangerous criminal network being closed down.

"As well as the distress caused to victims, the manner in which they carried out their offending presented a real danger to the public and I am pleased that they have now been brought to justice."

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Home Office/Studies

Photo credit: Greater London Authority

ELIZABETH LINE



Elizabeth Line finally fully open for travellers

Shenfield residents are now able to travel directly into London without having to change trains, with lines from Reading, Heathrow and Shenfield connected since November 6.

Customers travelling from Shenfield will be able to travel west all the way to Paddington without needing to change at Liverpool Street.

A study published by property website Rightmove showed that the Elizabeth Line was already having a significant effect on property prices for areas along the line, with asking prices for homes near Maryland Station in Newham having doubled.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan (pictured above) said: "London benefits but also if you live in the west in Reading or in Shenfield, Essex or Windsor, you benefit as well.

"This new stage of the Elizabeth Line will bring a huge boost to our city, including encouraging people to make the most of the capital, and will help support businesses in the heart of our city.

"I'm so proud of this transformational addition to our public transport network. The Elizabeth Line is helping to build a better London – a fairer, greener and more prosperous city for all Londoners."

Cricket club uses AGM to support food bank

Shenfield Cricket Club (SCC) have collaborated since more with their local food bank, the Daily Bread in Hutton.

SCC's annual general meeting was held on Sunday, November 20, with all members, parents and interested parties invited to attend and bring food to donate to the food bank.

Members were asked to bring tins, packets and dried food as well as Christmas food to be distributed to local families in need.

SCC are also seeking to raise funds through a 2022 World Cup Score predictions game, with the winner earning 50 per cent of the total prize pool made up of

the various £10 entry fees paid.

Alongside their predictions league, SCC are also offering those who wish to watch England games the option to book a space at the cricket club to watch it with others.

They said: "With it being a winter World Cup, it does mean we are limited with the amount of people we can fit in.

"We also need to make sure that people who say they are coming to watch do actually come. So, we will be doing a pre-booked guestlist with money to be paid ahead of each match day."

Find out more at www.shenfield.cc



BURGHART for BRENTWOOD



Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar



LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD

I've had the pleasure of working in three ministerial positions in the last year in the Department for Education, the Department for Work and Pensions and, currently, the Cabinet Office.

The Cabinet Office has a wide brief. Among its most unusual recent work is responding to a message from the King to Parliament requesting that Princess Anne and the Earl of Wessex are made Counsellors of State, those who can act on his behalf when he is travelling on state business.

Having previously been the Minister for Skills for eight months, I retain a great interest in apprenticeships and training, so I was delighted to be able to visit the new PERI site in Warley, which provides timber, building supplies, scaffolding and formwork for the construction of some of the biggest buildings in London.

Prior to PERI developing the site, it had been looking rather shabby and weather-beaten, so there is no doubt the new building has smartened up one of the gateways to Brentwood.

The company has opportunities for all levels of skill and experience, from sorting and upcycling the kit it



hires out to construction companies across the UK, to designing and creating intricate formwork.

PERI is keen to embrace the government's apprenticeship scheme, and is looking for local workers who want the opportunity to develop their skills. I'm sure there are some great opportunities for anyone who wants to work in the construction industry, from school leavers to those with computer-aided design skills to design the formwork needed for many of the big infrastructure projects of the 21st century.

As this is the final VISION Billericay Shenfield for 2022, I would like to take the opportunity to offer very best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Pupils come fourth in contest

Shenfield St Mary's Church of England Primary School has come fourth in a national competition which challenges students to be more environmentally minded.

Schools signed up to the Planet League to carry out climate-friendly activities to score goals for their favourite football club.

Goals in the Planet League can be scored by cooking meat-free meals, walking or cycling 2km, designing stickers to remind people at home to turn off lights, and much more.

Sally Taggart, headteacher at the school, said: "At Shenfield St Mary's C of E Primary School, we are so proud of how the children have responded to the challenge of the Planet League activities.

"Our West Ham community activator first introduced us to the competition and then our Eco Warriors encouraged the children in their classes to take part. Even some of the staff got involved in taking part in the activities at home.

"It has been a great way to get the children to be enthusiastic about climate change and sustainability, making them more aware of how small changes they make in their daily lives can have a huge impact on the environment and the world."



Photo credit: St Mary's Church of England Primary School



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LIVE NEFF COOKING DEMONSTRATION DAY

To help any clients planning a kitchen renovation in 2023, Regal Kitchens will be hosting a LIVE NEFF cooking demonstration day between 10am and 4pm on Saturday 10th December. All customers whether existing, new or potential are all welcome to come along and sample freshly prepared food and enjoy complimentary drinks, along with expert advice from our friendly staff on the latest NEFF products and kitchen innovations. Everyone attending will be given a chance to enter our free prize draw to win kitchen equipment worth hundreds of pounds plus everyone leaves with a goody bag with contents worth around £20



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For more information about their upcoming event contact emma@regalkitchens.net or call 01245 351151

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KFC KRAZY!

Did you know that while you're tucking into your roast turkey and all the trimmings on Christmas Day, over in Japan, they're chowing down on crispy chicken with a selection of sides?

HOW DO THE PEOPLE OF JAPAN CELEBRATE CHRISTMAS?

In Japan, Christmas is still a secular holiday as less than one per cent of the population identify as Christian. Instead, they use this holiday as a time for families and friends to have parties, make plans for dinner and enjoy general celebrations.

WHAT IS THE JAPANESE KFC CHRISTMAS CRAZE?

An estimated 3.6 million Japanese families treat themselves to KFC every festive season, with what has to be one of the world's most unique Christmas food traditions.

In fact, demand is so high that locals often have to queue for hours to get their hands on a bucket or two of this popular cuisine.

HOW DID THIS TRADITION START?

This peculiar demand for KFC at Christmas came about because of a campaign that was inspired by Takeshi Okawara, the manager of the first-ever KFC in Japan. Shortly after it opened in 1970, he woke up at midnight with the idea to sell a 'party barrel' of fried chicken on Christmas Day. In 1974, the marketing campaign went national, calling it Kurisumasu ni wa Kentakkii, or Kentucky for Christmas. The rest, as they say, is history.

WHAT DOES THE KFC CHRISTMAS MEAL CONSIST OF?

As well as buckets of fried chicken, families in Japan tuck into lots of sides, cakes and even wine. Some of this year's offerings include:

- > A box of chicken for 3,780 yen (around £22)
- > A party box with eight pieces of chicken, a lasagne and a chocolate cake for 4,000 yen (around £25)
- > A premium roasted chicken and sides for 5,800 yen (around £35)

On average, these packages account for a whopping one-third of the chain's yearly sales in Japan.



PETS

COMPANIONS at Christmas

Christmas is a time to relax and spend time with your loved ones. And your four-legged family members also love the chance to enjoy more time together, as well as greeting visitors, taking in different sights and smells, and giving you puppy-dog eyes for extra treats.

Your dog can bring joy this Christmas, and hanging out together can also help you escape from the seasonal stress.

Dog behaviourist Zoe Willingham, who has 23 pups, shares seven magical moments you can enjoy this Christmas.

1. Count down to Santa Paws' arrival with their own doggy advent calendar and make them happy every morning.

2. Give them a special toy to play with when you dress the Christmas tree so they're not jumping up at the baubles.

3. Top up your training to make sure they have the essential skills to wow your guests and anyone you visit with their impeccable manners.

4. Get social and enjoy a festive feast at your favourite dog-friendly pub or restaurant.

5. Wrap up warm and get outdoors together. It might be chilly, but being in the fresh air, taking in the scents, and spending time with you means your dog will be happy and content.

6. After your wintry walk, what's cuter than seeing your dog curled up snoozing while you watch your favourite Christmas film?

7. Your pup is sure to be top of Santa's Nice List, so make sure they have a doggy stocking packed with fun toys and healthy treats to open on Christmas morning.

Want to chat about fun activities you can enjoy with your dog or ask a question about training? For more tips and advice, please visit www.bestbehaviourdogtraining.co.uk




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Queen for 70 years

BUT COULD IT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT?



Would Elizabeth have become queen if her uncle, King Edward VIII, hadn't renounced the throne to marry the woman he loved? And would she have reigned for so long?

In December 1936, King Edward VIII abdicated the throne to marry divorcee Wallis Simpson. This was because he didn't want to live without the woman he loved by his side and, at the time, the Church of England didn't allow divorced people like Mrs Simpson to remarry in church if their ex-spouse was still alive. And as Edward was the nominal head of the church, it was felt he had no choice but to step aside.

So the crown passed to Edward's younger brother, who became King George VI. When George died in 1952, aged just 56, his elder daughter, the 25-year-old Princess Elizabeth, became queen. As Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, she became the UK's longest-ever reigning monarch – leading the country for 70 years until her death earlier this year.

But what would have happened if things had gone differently?

What if Edward had married Mrs Simpson but refused to give up the throne? Because the couple didn't have children together, Edward's younger brother George would still have been his heir. Edward survived his younger brother by 20 years – so the crown would have still gone to Elizabeth. But this would have happened in 1972, not 1952. So she would have ruled for 50 years rather than the record-breaking 70.

It's also possible that Edward would have had at least one child if he'd married someone other than Mrs Simpson. The line of succession would then have passed through this child – and Elizabeth may have never become queen.

Another line of thought is that Edward's attitude to the monarchy and politics was troublesome, and the monarchy wouldn't have survived his rule.

But that's another story.

Photo credit: Design Post/istockphoto



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Everything's going TO BE OKAY

ONE OF BRITAIN'S BEST-LOVED COMEDIANS RETURNS

For a few years, it seemed you couldn't turn on the television or open a newspaper without seeing a mention of Peter Kay.

The larger-than-life Bolton-born comedian always seems to have had the Midas touch since bursting onto the scene when winning Channel 4's *So You Think You're Funny?* contest in 1997.

A year later, he was nominated for a Perrier Award for his stand-up show at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival, and by the time the Millennium came round, he was a regular on our TV screens, extolling a brand of observational yet irreverent comedy across multiple successful sitcom series. Included in these is the iconic *Phoenix Nights* – which, despite its legacy, only totalled 12 episodes – *Max and Paddy's Road to Nowhere*, *Peter Kay's Car Share* and *Peter Kay's Comedy Shuffle*. Switching almost seamlessly between filmed commitments and hilarious stand-up, it seemed Kay could do no wrong.

Kay's self-removal from the public eye was the subject of much speculation after he wrapped up his last TV projects back in 2017. It happened when his 90-date *Have Gags, Will Travel* tour planned for 2018/19 was cancelled.

He broke cover on events shortly afterwards, referencing The Lily Foundation, which works to raise awareness of mitochondrial disease in the UK.

He wrote: "The Lily Foundation is an inspiring charity that helps to improve the lives of children with mitochondrial disease."

Mitochondrial disease is a term that covers a range of often devastating conditions involving the failure of mitochondria, which live inside cells and which play a key role in providing energy. If they do not work properly, this can lead to serious problems for the body.

"I've had first-hand experience of the foundation's work and I'm proud to raise both awareness and much-needed funds to help with the inspiring work it provides to children and their families," said Kay.

With his family's health issues now, seemingly, in a place where he can refocus on work, the funnyman, now 49, is getting back to what he does best with his first UK tour in 12 years. Aptly titled *Peter Kay Live: Better Late Than Never*, he will visit Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Belfast, Newcastle, Dublin, Glasgow, Cardiff and Nottingham between December 2022 and August 2023.

However, such was the demand for tickets that the Ticketmaster site crashed under the weight of demand. Subsequently, additional dates have been added for 2024 and 2025.

Kay insisted that the ticket prices reflect the £35 cost from his last UK tour, way back in 2010. "The cost-of-living crisis has hit most and will hit everyone at some point," he said. "It's something I would do for free if I could. But even if I can't do that, this isn't a money-making exercise – it's an honour to be in demand still after all this time and I'm excited about having a laugh with people in a live setting all over again.

"I also may be a bit rusty... hence the freezing of the ticket price," he joked.

In addition, Kay, the recipient of four BAFTAs and a National Television Award, has been announced as the first artist in the world to perform a monthly residency at the O2. At a time when what we're allowed to laugh at seems under more scrutiny than ever before, it seems we could all benefit from knowing the way to Amarillo... or the North Greenwich arena, at least.

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Niamh already has extensive experience running her own Premium Domestic Cleaning service – Bright & Beautiful Grays, which has been operating for eight years. Neil has worked for Thurrock Council and has always aspired towards owning his own company. When he discovered Enviro Clean, it became the obvious choice.

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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

ACROSS

- 1. Prima donna (4)
- 3. Stated emphatically (8)
- 9. Shackle (7)
- 10. Animal that walks on two legs (5)
- 11. Narcissism (4-8)
- 13. Contributes information (6)
- 15. Not noticed (6)
- 17. Easy to converse with (12)
- 20. Person who flies an aircraft (5)
- 21. Pays no attention to (7)
- 22. Where photographs are developed (8)
- 23. Stitches (4)

DOWN

- 1. Relating to the home (8)
- 2. Type of plastic (5)
- 4. Constructs a building (6)
- 5. Intricate and confusing (12)
- 6. Retaliatory action (7)
- 7. Extinct bird (4)
- 8. Author of screenplays (12)
- 12. Opposites (8)

1		2		3	4		5	6	7
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11									
									12
13		14				15			
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20					21				
22							23		

- 14. Liked by many people (7)
- 15. Flat-bottomed boat (5)
- 16. Gambling house (6)
- 17. Moved quickly (4)

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Christmas takes place on December 25 – the day the Roman Catholic Church chose to mark Jesus’ birthday. No one actually knows the exact date Jesus was born.
- ▶ Not everyone celebrates Christmas on the same day. For example, Greek Orthodox Christians often celebrate on January 7.
- ▶ Many Christmas traditions come from the Victorian era, including crackers, roast turkey and gift-giving.
- ▶ Christmas trees were first seen in Germany in the 16th century, when fir trees were decorated with fruit and nuts.
- ▶ *Jingle Bells* was originally a Thanksgiving song written in 1850.
- ▶ It only took six weeks for Charles Dickens to write *A Christmas Carol*.

SUDOKU

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	7		4				3	2
7	5			1			4	
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1		4			3			



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It is an innovative social construct that uses a new blueprint for accommodation design, whereby tenants in a space have individual rooms, but shared social and kitchen areas.

The concept is much the same as you would have in a student house, though the target market is very much young professionals, and the architectural and interior finish reflects a demographic who are in employment and looking to build careers and interactions with like-minded people.

While in terms of location, Coliving can provide a huge advantage with reductions in commuting time and cost, an additional environmental impact comes by way of shared amenities, all-inclusive bills and

communal events and facilities.

While for some young people the idea of being thrown into a space with a number of strangers may be daunting, Coliving spaces are typically extremely careful to maintain high safety standards for residents, with letting agents carefully screening both residents and staff, and most include a 24/7 concierge service to help manage the building.

Coliving also provides flexibility for residents who don't want to be caught in long-term renting situations; nor might they have the ability to put a large deposit down. Instead, a rental term might be for just a few days up to a few months, and longer if desired.

What people therefore get is a ready-made community of like-minded people, excellent facilities, and all the social and practical benefits of living in a central, busy part of town.



THE GROWING NEED FOR INTERGENERATIONAL PLANNING

With the next 30 years set to witness the largest-ever intergenerational passing of wealth, the need for inheritance advice has never been greater. Intergenerational planning, however, can also help with more immediate financial needs, particularly when generations work collaboratively to find solutions that support the whole family both now and in the future.

INFLATION CONCERNS

Currently, financial pressures are proving a key challenge across all generations, especially the impact of soaring energy bills as we move towards the winter period. The cost-of-living squeeze, though, is not only impacting people's current spending power, but also their future decision-making capabilities with regard to key issues such as housing, private education or university.

BALANCING CURRENT AND FUTURE NEEDS

This has resulted in families increasingly adopting integrated strategies, especially in relation to gifting, to address imminent financial challenges. While reducing future Inheritance Tax liabilities inevitably remains at the heart of intergenerational planning decisions, the growing necessity to balance today's and tomorrow's needs is resulting in the focus shifting to support for children and grandchildren now.

INVOLVING THE GENERATIONS

Intergenerational planning tends to be most effective when

the process is not just focused on those who currently hold wealth. While funding a comfortable retirement and quality of care for the 'caretaker' generations remain fundamental elements of intergenerational planning, delivery of support for the coming generations and ensuring wealth passes efficiently to the right individuals at the right time have become increasingly important dimensions.

MORE FAMILIES SHARE AN ADVISER

Greater involvement across multiple generations has also seen sharing a financial adviser become increasingly commonplace. This trend offers significant benefits, particularly when it comes to joining up a whole family's needs with inheritance and gifting strategies, while treating all family members fairly.

ENCOURAGING CONVERSATIONS

If your family needs help with any aspect of intergenerational planning, then please get in touch. We'll be happy to assist by encouraging more open financial conversations across the generations.

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.



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- Pensions On Divorce
- Divorce
- Family Mediation
- Prenuptial Agreements

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Head of Family Team
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ARE YOUR SLIPPERS Ruining YOUR HEALTH?

Soft, warm and oh so comfy, slippers are a staple for many. However, could they be doing more harm than good to your feet? Let's find out.

INSUFFICIENT HEEL SUPPORT: Your choice of footwear should provide both support and protection, especially if you are wearing them for long periods of time. However, with every step you take in slip-on footwear, your toes are forced to grasp the slipper to lift it off the ground and carry it, which has a negative effect on the muscles and joints of the foot.

INSTABILITY ALL UP YOUR BODY: Slippers challenge all the joints in your body owing to their lack of ankle support. In fact, an unstable ankle can drag both your knees and hips in, downwards or outwards, depending on your body type. This can cause a whole host of problems, including pain and poor posture.

HIGHER RISK OF FALLS: For the elderly, who are already at a greater risk of slipping and falling, slippers can be extremely dangerous. Slippers provide very little grip compared to other types of

footwear, which means that you are more likely to lose your balance, especially when walking on tiled, wooden or vinyl floors.

NON-BREATHABLE: Although slippers are meant to keep your feet cosy, they can easily make them too hot if they are made of poor-quality, synthetic fabric. This can create a breeding ground for fungi and bacteria and increase your risk of athlete's foot.

SO WHAT SHOULD YOU WEAR ON YOUR FEET IN THE HOUSE?

Opt for supportive, lace-up shoes that stay on the foot as you walk as these will cushion and protect your feet.

- Some of the most supportive footwear brands include:
 - > Birkenstock Milano
 - > FitFlop
 - > TOMS
 - > Kalahari

It is also a good idea to walk around barefoot sometimes as this can help to strengthen and stretch the muscles, tendons and ligaments in your feet. This helps to improve balance and to prevent injury, knee strain and back problems.



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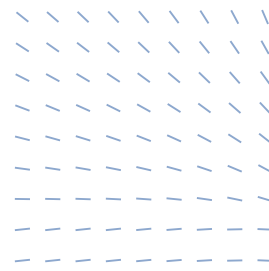
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Kitchari

IS THIS THE ULTIMATE CLEANSE?

Do you love a good cleanse? Offering you the opportunity to reset your eating habits and rest your digestive system, kitchari cleanses are common in Ayurvedic medicine and offer a whole host of health benefits.

What are the benefits of a kitchari cleanse?

Eliminate toxins from the body | Aid weight loss | Improve energy | Improve digestion and restore regular bowel movements | Promote overall good health

How to perform a kitchari cleanse

Pre-cleanse: A pre-cleanse period typically takes place one week before the cleanse. During this time, you should cut back on sugar, caffeine, alcohol and processed foods.

Cleanse: During your three-day cleanse, you should aim to eat a grain-based dish for breakfast, such as oatmeal with warming spices, and then a bowl of kitchari for lunch and dinner. Aim to drink 8-10 servings of water or herbal tea each day.

Post-cleanse: In the 7-10 days following your cleanse, you should slowly reintroduce other foods into your diet. You may want to continue eating kitchari for one meal a day for the first few days to avoid upsetting your digestive system.

Kitchari recipe

You will need:

1 cup white basmati rice | ½ cup yellow mung dal | 2 tbsp ghee | Kitchari spice mix (¼ tsp black mustard seeds, ½ tsp cumin seeds, ½ tsp turmeric powder, 1½ tsp coriander powder, ½ tsp fennel powder, 1 tsp fresh grated ginger) | 1 tsp natural mineral salt | 6 cups water | 2 cups of vegetables such as asparagus, carrots, celery, green beans, sweet potato, squash or courgette, cut into bite-sized pieces

How to make:

1. Soak the mung dal overnight.
2. Strain the soaking water and then combine the mung dal with the rice.
3. Rinse the mixture until the water runs clear then set it aside.
4. Warm the ghee over a medium heat and add the seeds until they pop.
5. Add the rest of the spices.
6. Stir in the rice and mung dal and then sauté for a few minutes.
7. Add the water and bring to the boil.
8. Add the salt, reduce the heat and simmer for 20 minutes.
9. Add the vegetables.
10. Cook for a further 20 minutes.

NB: The consistency should be thick and more like a stew than a broth.



Photo credit: One Green Planet

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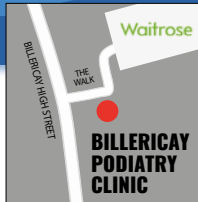
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TRAVEL

Take me to the MOUNTAINS



Pikes Peak



Kilimanjaro



Mauna Kea



Mount Everest

If mountain climbing is on your bucket list, there's no better day to start planning your trip than International Mountain Day, which takes place on December 11.

Mountains are home to 15 per cent of the world's population and about half of the world's 'biodiversity hotspots' – areas with the richest concentration of threatened plant and animal life. But go carefully and you can experience all the thrills of the mountain, while also helping local communities and protecting fragile ecosystems.

Here are three mountains suitable for a range of abilities – though remember, you'll still need a high level of fitness and endurance to tackle any mountain.

MOUNT FUJI, JAPAN – 3,776M
The hike along the most popular route to the peak of Mount Fuji takes around eight hours. Most climbers start at night to reach the summit at sunrise. The official hiking months are July and August.

PIKES PEAK, COLORADO, UNITED STATES – 4,302M
This 21km hike in the Rockies lasts the whole day and takes you to the highest point on the US mainland. As well as stunning views at the summit, there's also a state-of-the-art visitor centre.

MOUNT KILIMANJARO, TANZANIA – 5,895M
Most trails up Africa's highest mountain take five or six days, allowing climbers to acclimatise to the thin air as they go. If you're brave enough, you can even spend a night camping in the mountain's crater.

- MOUNTAIN FACTS:**
- > There are 1,187,049 mountains in the world.
 - > The tallest sea mountain in the world is Mauna Kea in Hawaii at 10,205m, but more than half of it is underwater. Everest is the world's highest mountain, at 8,848.86m above sea level.
 - > Bhutan is easily the most mountainous country in the world – nearly 99 per cent of it is made up of mountains.
 - > Annapurna I in Nepal is widely regarded as the most difficult and dangerous mountain to climb.
 - > Around 300,000 people a year climb Mount Fuji, making it the world's most frequently climbed mountain.



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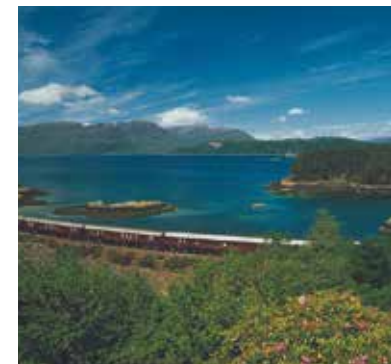
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SPORT

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ENGLAND CLINCH T20 WORLD CUP SUCCESS

England's hard-hitting, bombastic-bowling T20 side are the best in the world – their clinching of the World Cup in Australia in the middle of November capped a memorable few weeks Down Under, in which captain Jos Buttler MBE's side battled back from adversity to lift their first world crown since back in 2010.

Chasing a modest Pakistan total of 137 in the Melbourne final, an early batting wobble was calmed by the inspirational Ben Stokes OBE, as England knocked off the required runs with an over to spare.

It was another monstrous moment for Stokes, who has made a habit of being England's go-to man for the big occasion. Indeed, when entering the crease with the side 45/3, there were fears his side might wilt at the final hurdle, having got themselves into the final despite a group defeat to Ireland and a rain washout draw versus Australia.

Perhaps we shouldn't have worried. After all, it's getting to be something of a regular thing, both for Stokes and in the way the England team have showed real prowess in their white-ball cricket over the past few years.

Stokes was instrumental as the Three Lions clinched the ODI World Cup in 2019, and although he has stepped down from 50-over duties now, he will look to overturn the odds and inspire the Test side to victory over Australia in next year's Ashes.

In the final, he smashed 52 off 49 balls to steer his side home, with Buttler's 26 and Harry Brook's 20 other notable contributions.

No one can question the fact that England were deserving champions. On the way to lifting the trophy, they defeated T20 heavyweights New Zealand, Sri Lanka and India, and in the final, repelled the threat of arguably the most feared bowling attack in the game, as Pakistan failed to find the breakthroughs they needed.



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A score to REMEMBER

Each month, we look at one of the most significant events in British sporting history. This month, we go back 21 years to England's famous 5-1 victory over the Germans at the Olympic Stadium in Munich.

"This is getting better and better and better," enthused John Motson OBE as Michael Owen sauntered through to propel England into a 4-1 lead against old foes Germany. And there was still more to come as Emile Heskey made it five, capping a special night for Liverpool, as all the goals were scored by Reds; for Sven-Göran Eriksson, who truly arrived as Three Lions' manager on that incredible Saturday evening; and for England fans everywhere, who finally felt justified in putting expectation over hope.

Of course, the expectations we had over the so-called Golden Generation were, in fact, misplaced. England crashed out to a freak Ronaldinho goal in the World Cup finals the following year, then suffered countless other false dawns throughout the Noughties, more often than not involving penalty

shoot-outs... for a change. However, on that special night in Munich, all was good with the world. Very good. England had trailed to Carsten Jancker's fifth-minute goal, but Owen's hat-trick and Steven Gerrard MBE's piledriver on the stroke of half-time confirmed a special night for British sport.

Not only had England exorcised the spectre of Euros heartbreak five years previously, but they'd also exacted revenge on the Germans for the 1-0 defeat they suffered at the old Wembley Stadium in 2000 – a match that was to be Kevin Keegan's final game in charge.

That his replacement, the enigmatic Swede Eriksson, had turned the tide to such an extent in the 11 months in between, was a big part of arguably the most complete England performance of a generation (and right up there with the 4-1 hammering of the Netherlands at Wembley at the 1996 Euros).

The project may not have finished the way it should have, but we could revel in the glory for one night.



Photo credit: Associated Press



HOW TO COOK WITH CHESTNUTS

When it comes to festive food, chestnuts go hand-in-hand with Christmas. However, did you know that there are many different ways you can cook and enjoy these mouthfuls of nutty deliciousness?

ABOUT CHESTNUTS

Chestnuts are the large edible fruit of the chestnut tree and are popular in both Europe and China. When you cook chestnuts, they produce a delicate and slightly sweet flavour, with a soft texture that has a similar consistency to baked potatoes. You cannot eat raw chestnuts so they must be cooked before serving.

THREE WAYS TO COOK CHESTNUTS

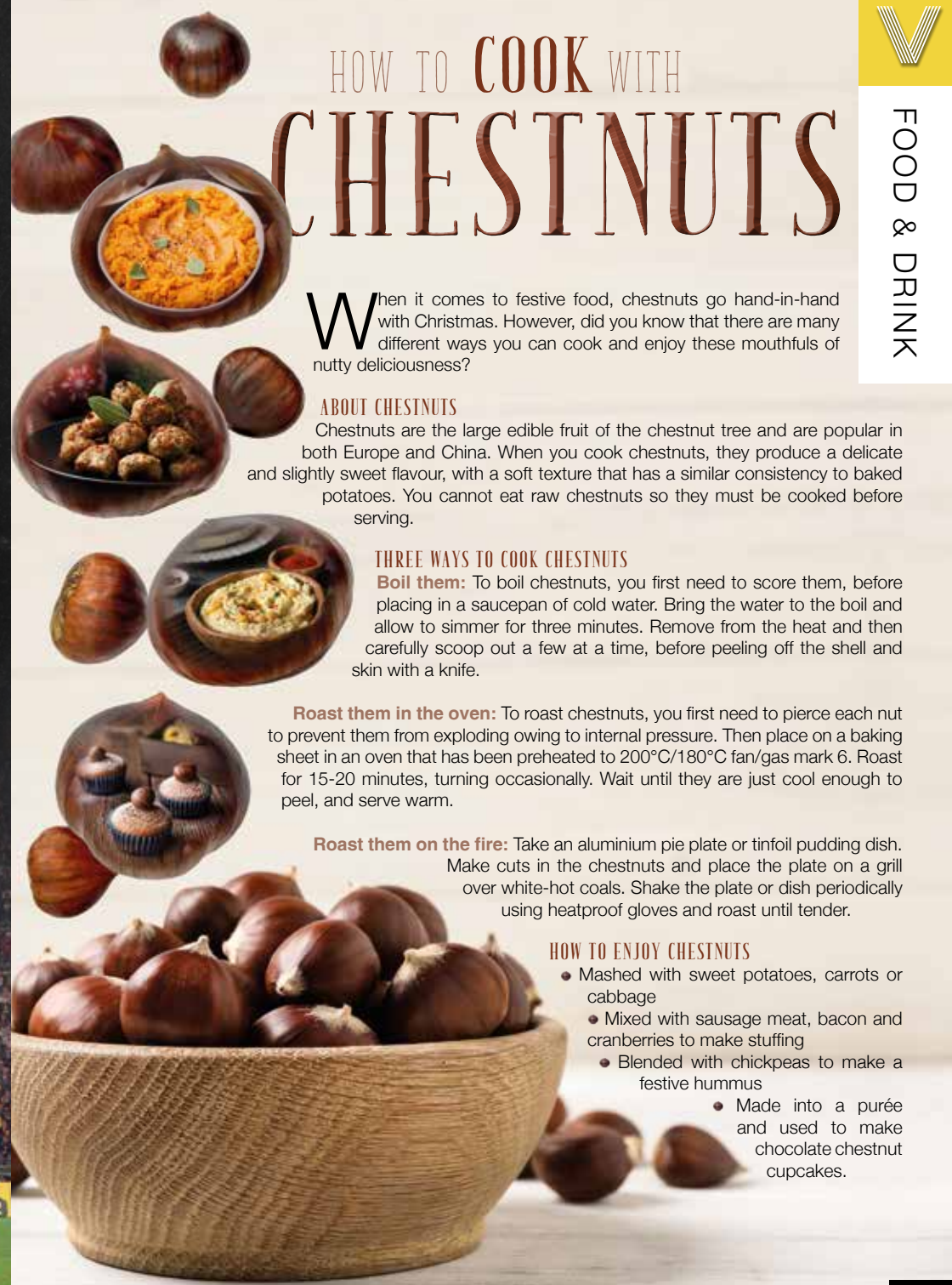
Boil them: To boil chestnuts, you first need to score them, before placing in a saucepan of cold water. Bring the water to the boil and allow to simmer for three minutes. Remove from the heat and then carefully scoop out a few at a time, before peeling off the shell and skin with a knife.

Roast them in the oven: To roast chestnuts, you first need to pierce each nut to prevent them from exploding owing to internal pressure. Then place on a baking sheet in an oven that has been preheated to 200°C/180°C fan/gas mark 6. Roast for 15-20 minutes, turning occasionally. Wait until they are just cool enough to peel, and serve warm.

Roast them on the fire: Take an aluminium pie plate or tinfoil pudding dish. Make cuts in the chestnuts and place the plate on a grill over white-hot coals. Shake the plate or dish periodically using heatproof gloves and roast until tender.

HOW TO ENJOY CHESTNUTS

- Mashed with sweet potatoes, carrots or cabbage
- Mixed with sausage meat, bacon and cranberries to make stuffing
- Blended with chickpeas to make a festive hummus
- Made into a purée and used to make chocolate chestnut cupcakes.





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FOOD & DRINK

Time for TIRAMISU

CELEBRATING THE BOOZY ITALIAN DESSERT THAT ALWAYS OFFERS A LIFT

We're used to hearing about the history and provenance of our culinary loves – tales of family traditions and secret recipes that have been handed down for centuries.

To say that tiramisu doesn't fit into that category perhaps sounds like an attempt to besmirch it slightly, but the opposite is actually true. Instead, this is a dessert whose parentage is surprisingly recent.

The dish was invented by Italian restaurateur Ado Campeol in 1972 – thus the tiramisu has just completed half a century of service in cafés, restaurants and kitchens. In that time, it has been popularised the world over.

Now is an apt moment to celebrate the dessert, as Campeol passed away at the age of 93 this October.

The pudding has an impressive legacy, especially as a combination of eggs

whipped with mascarpone cheese, coffee-soaked biscuits and bitter cocoa powder perhaps doesn't sound like the most obvious taste combination.

The name 'tiramisu' translates to mean 'lift me up' in Italian due to the kick offered by the coffee, while rum or marsala is typically added to the mix to offer a premium, eclectic edge.

QUICK TIRAMISU RECIPE

INGREDIENTS:

3 tsp instant coffee granules		3 tbsp coffee liqueur	
250g tub mascarpone		85g condensed milk	
1 tsp vanilla extract		4-6 sponge fingers	
1 tbsp cocoa powder			

STEP ONE: Mix the coffee granules with 2 tbsp boiling water in a large jug and stir to combine. Add the coffee liqueur and 75ml cold water. Pour into a shallow dish and set aside.

STEP TWO: Make the cream layer by beating the mascarpone, condensed milk and vanilla extract with an electric whisk until thick and smooth.

STEP THREE: Break the sponge fingers into three pieces and soak in the coffee mixture for a few seconds. Put a few of the sponge pieces in the bottom of two wine or sundae glasses and top with the cream mixture. Sift over the cocoa and chill for at least one hour before serving.





MOTORING

BIDDING FAREWELL TO THE *Fiesta*



WITH NEWS THAT THE FORD FIESTA IS TO TAKE A PERMANENT SIESTA, WE CELEBRATE THE LEGACY OF THIS BRITISH MOTORING MAINSTAY

If there is one car that portrays the modern era of motoring, it is undoubtedly the Ford Fiesta.

It was 1976 when the first Fiestas rolled off the Ford production plant in Dagenham, arrowing their way to the driveways of motorists looking for an affordable, fuel-efficient and fun way to conquer the roads.

The Fiesta has always been instantly recognisable among an ever-increasing and sometimes perplexing range of Ford models. Indeed, even though its lifespan traverses four decades and eight generations, the car that has shifted more than 22 million units – one fifth of those in the UK – has always stood out as the ultimate fun run-around.

The car has come in saloon, hatchback and even convertible versions – always nippy, always chic, and with a speediness that belies what has always been a modest price tag.

Indeed, the Fiesta epitomised a new generation of car buyers through the 1980s, who were keen to ditch the clumsy, clunky motors of the era, looking instead for a rather more streamlined and sporty approach.

Yet while the model arrived as a mark of practicality and fashion, it has found its exit governed by the same elements, ultimately being undone by the green car revolution. Hence Ford is also ditching the Galaxy and the S-Max, with the last of these being produced next April. Instead, the manufacturer – which has slipped to fifth globally in recent years, behind Toyota, Volkswagen, Hyundai and General Motors – is channelling all its energy into three new electric passenger vehicles and a further four new commercial models.

The Fiesta's day may be done, but the car's presence will be celebrated on our roads for many years to come.

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The Travel Boutique, Travel Lounge in Shenfield has reopened much to everyone's delight. We may have been working remotely for the past 10 months but throughout we have continued to provide our loyal customers with our personal service and impartial advice and the widest variety of holidays, with many of you enjoying treasured getaways in 2022 and already booked with us for 2023.



Our Luxury Concierge Service can assist with a personalised itinerary for a truly unforgettable experience. Janette Healey owner of the Travel Boutique is delighted to be back on the High Street: *"What a wonderful welcome back. It's so nice to see my customers in person after months of speaking by telephone and over skype. Planning holidays is what I love to do best and with more than thirty years in travel there is nothing better than sitting face to face with my clients. I have personally been to some wonderful places all over the World and I love to share my knowledge and insight. During my*

time in Travel I have built some wonderful relationships with Hotel and Tour Operator partners across the Globe. Travel is our passion and customer care, our forte."

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WHY IT'S VITAL TO KEEP YOUR GUTTERS CLEAR AND RUNNING SMOOTHLY

The sight of water either pooling in a gutter or, worse still, spilling out over the side of it, can signal real issues for your home.

The autumn and winter months bring together the ultimate combination of factors that mean it pays to check your gutters now before any problems have the chance to get worse.

Your utter gutter nightmare is started by an accumulation of plant debris, sticks, twigs, leaves and bracken. This can be blown onto your roof, dropped by flying birds or, as far as moss goes, may have grown there.

This accumulation of dead matter can form an impenetrable path for rainwater, leading to leaks, damp and mould. A constant drip of liquid over a surface will soon compromise brick material and coatings, with the water penetrating through gaps in the mortar. It will eventually hit your internal plaster layer, often getting trapped behind paint and wallpaper, whereby it will spread across the wall.

The first you may know about this is a discolouration of wallpaper, or a slightly wet stain that's cold to the touch. At this point, that handful of stuck leaves may have compromised an entire wall, which will require drying out and possible replastering.

Externally, blocked gutters can also rot wooden fascia boards around your roof. These are in place to deflect water and wind from the property, and when they deteriorate, their effectiveness drops.

Finally, blocked gutters can also lead to foundation damage; and if you have a cellar or basement – or any other room below surface level – this will be particularly susceptible to flooding.

While you may imagine scaling a ladder in order to hook out a handful of decomposing matter is easy, it often pays to enlist professional help to ensure the job is done properly.

Gutter maintenance specialists will know what to do if they encounter animals or nests, and they may also be able to attend to other quick bits of maintenance, such as replacing loose or broken tiles.

Create your own SENSORY GARDEN

A sensory garden is designed to stimulate the five basic senses of sight, smell, sound, touch and taste, and has the ability to enhance your sense of wellbeing, reduce stress and calm the mind. Find out the best sensory garden plants and features below.

CURRY PLANT: An evergreen shrub that boasts silvery grey foliage and pale yellow flowers, the curry plant provides a beautiful aroma and is known for attracting bees and other pollinators. Plant in a sunny, sheltered spot in well-drained soil and trim regularly to help it keep its shape.

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES: Ornamental grasses such as pampas grass and architectural seed heads add structure and movement to a sensory garden. Pick creeping, hanging and straight standing grasses for maximum effect.

LAMB'S EAR: Featuring velvety foliage that looks just like a pair of lamb's ears, this evergreen perennial produces stunning purple-pink flowers in the summer months that promise to add colour and depth to your garden. Plant them in open borders with other perennials or grow in containers.

WILD STRAWBERRIES: Wild strawberry, known as *fragaria vesca*, produces small and super-sweet fruit that is perfect for stimulating your senses of smell and taste. This plant loves partial sun and fairly damp conditions.

LAVENDER: Easy to grow and care for, lavender can add both scent and colour to your garden, as well as attracting pollinators. Weave in among other summer-blooming flowers or plant near your home to enjoy its strong aroma whenever you pop your head outside the door.

A WATER FEATURE: A water feature such as a pond, fountain or bird bath makes a great addition to a sensory garden. Providing beautiful reflections, calming sounds and contrasting texture, it will also attract wildlife and a wide variety of colourful birds.



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Ravishing reds

There is nothing like a bold slick of red lipstick to signal the start of the festive party season, and the right shade has the ability to transform any look from okay to outstanding. Here's how to get the perfect red lip, plus how to choose the right shade for your skin tone.

- STEP 1: Prep your lips** – Always buff your lips before you apply lipstick as this will help to ensure that your lips are free from flakes and plumped up ready for application. Use a clean toothbrush or lip scrub, followed by lip balm.
- STEP 2: Apply foundation** – Foundation makes a great base for lipstick and can help your chosen shade stay put for longer. Use your normal foundation for best results.
- STEP 3: Use a nude pencil** – Rather than using a red lip pencil, a nude one is more forgiving of mistakes and can help you to achieve the perfect shape.
- STEP 4: Fill in the colour** – Use a lip brush to gradually build up colour on your lips rather than applying the lipstick directly. Add several coats for best results.

RED LIPSTICK SHADES FOR EACH SKIN TONE

Universal shades: True red shades that boast equal amounts of blue and orange look good on every skin tone.

Fair complexions: Opt for a pink-based undertone such as raspberry, which will complement the pink tones in your complexion.

Light complexions: Both neutral and warmish complexions suit orange-based reds as these will pick up the golden undertones of your skin.

Medium complexions: If you tan easily, then you should change your lip shade based on the season. In the summer, choose an orange-based red. During the winter, opt for a cherry red.

Olive complexions: With yellow-green undertones, you should look for a brick- or rust-coloured red that will warm your complexion.

Dark complexions: Dark and golden skin tones boast a yellow undertone so can pull off a bold red lipstick. Alternatively, blue-based reds give a more natural look.



Wan WAY OF LIFE

AUTHOR, ACTOR, STYLIST, CHEF AND BUSINESSMAN, GOK WAN MBE CELEBRATES 15 YEARS ON OUR SCREENS



Photo credit: S Meddle/ITV/Shutterstock

Gok Wan MBE has spent the last decade as a fashionista, an agony aunt and a leading light for empowering men and women to love their bodies.

He has endured a sometimes arduous journey on the road to fashion individualism and finesse, starting out in murky make-up rooms before personality and precision forged his path into magazine shoots, then onto our TV screens, where he has remained ever since.

"I was a terrible make-up artist," he laughs. "I made everyone look like a drag queen."

Yet despite working the celebrity circuit and becoming a magazine regular, the now 47 year old was "petrified" about making the leap to TV when asked to audition for a show.

"The producers wanted me to be really horrible to a woman. I walked out thinking, 'I wouldn't do that to anybody on set'. I wouldn't go up to a model and say, 'You're not good enough'. I definitely wouldn't go up to a celebrity and say, 'Your bum looks fat in that dress'."

Instead, Gok – who as a teenager weighed 21 stone before battling anorexia in his early twenties – saw TV as an opportunity to celebrate women, advancing the notion that being a stylist is about creating the best solutions and broadest fantasies for everyday people.

Much of this success came via *How to Look Good Naked*, whereby Gok repeatedly challenged the taboo that stops women from celebrating their bodies regardless of shape, and set about installing a sense of confidence within the female population.

Success breeds success, and across *Easy Asian*, *This Morning* and *Say Yes to the Dress*, the fashion guru – always instantly recognisable by his glasses, which he rates as his "best friend, and which can guide me sometimes and help me vanish in others" – has remained relevant and respected in a fast-changing world.



The Open Bible Learning Group

Who are they?

You may want to study your Bible some more, to decide for yourself whether it really is unique, but it can be pretty daunting when you are faced with a list of local Christian churches. So many names. So many choices. It can all be rather confusing.

What, you might ask, do they all stand for and does it really matter which you pick? Is it best just to plump for the nearest church to where you live or the one where you know someone else who attends?

Well, the Billericay Open Bible Learning Group, who have a range of online materials, correspondence courses and a regular meeting in the town centre, have a very clear and distinctive viewpoint.

Their position, based on many years of study, is that the Holy Bible is the Word of God – and that this can be proved by compelling evidence! Not convinced? Then ask one of their members and they will show you how!

What's more, because this Word comes from the Creator of all things, it can be completely relied on

from start to finish... with every event it describes as much a part of history as the well-known happenings of the 20th or 21st centuries. This perspective means that every time you speak to a member of this group, they will methodically start with what the Bible says – as opposed to venturing their own opinion on the subject.

But what about the members themselves? Well, they come from all different walks of life: teachers, accountants, homemakers, council workers, health care professionals, sales people and many more besides. However, the common strand is that each one has devoted themselves to studying and applying the Word of God in their day-to-day lives. What's more, a part of their duty is to preach and teach those who have not yet heard about the Bible's wonderful promises and future hope, hence why this group exists.

Intrigued? Well, pop along and speak to someone at the Open Bible Learning Group... after all, what have you got to lose?

**OpenBibleLearningGroup.com
oblg@mail.com 0800 0197 125**



The Reading Rooms The Billericay home of the Open Bible Learning Group



Each Sunday afternoon, The Open Bible Learning Group open the doors to anyone with an enquiring mind and interest in reading their Bible and more effectively.

The group meets at 2:30 pm the centre of Billericay High St in the Reading Rooms to explore the exciting and powerful message God has revealed in his word, the Bible, by means of talks, discussions and presentations.

The Open Bible Learning Group are just ordinary men and women who first met in the Reading Rooms in 1957 as a place to study and Sunday worship.

OpenBibleLearningGroup.com/Events



Scan Code for Details

Our website has a full list of times and titles of our events in and around Billericay. In addition, we have recorded talks to listen to on a wide range of Bible topics and self study / home study packs to download for free.

**For help to read and understand your Bible either on your own or with others request your Step by Step Guides and ask about our friendly Bible Reading Group
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