



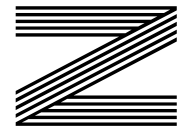
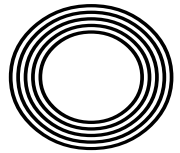
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# Editor's notes...

FEBRUARY 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BillericayShenfield. We're into February now - that fateful month when New Year's resolutions begin to scurry away like a thief in the night, never to be seen again. I admit that rarely does the start of a year go by without me promising to make either my own or someone else's life healthier or happier. This year I didn't, even though I'll be the first to admit that my fitness levels have taken a dive after the buoyant festive period. That's not to say I don't want to get back to a routine of regular exercise. I've already started, in fact. I'm on my bike every other day, choosing to walk over driving when I can and have cut out those sneaky snacks. The difference is that I want to get away from this being a New Year thing. I know so many people fall down on a resolution and believe the game is up. Not true! Not only should we take failure in life as just a temporary blip, but we should also be solid in the belief that good habits, new initiatives and a drive for self-improvement can and should happen at any time of the year. My advice is therefore to do something good in 2023, but use the whole of 2023 to do it.

*Nik Allen*

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CONTRIBUTORS | Tabatha Fabray, Fiona Goble, Jacob Collick, Olivia Bridgen

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# KEEP ON WOMBLING

## WOMBLING FREE, THE WOMBLES OF WIMBLEDON COMMON ARE WE

To celebrate 50 years since *The Wombles* first appeared on our screens, we explore how Orinoco and his furry chums were well ahead of their time.

The early 1970s was an era of rising food and fuel costs, political and social unrest, and dubious fashion choices. It also marked the moment when the very first episode of *The Wombles* aired, at 5.40pm on February 5, 1973, on BBC One.

Based on Elizabeth Beresford MBE's 1968 beloved children's book, the five-minute stop-motion masterpiece was titled *Orinoco and the Big Black Umbrella*, and was voiced by British actor Bernard Cribbins OBE. It told of a blustery day on Wimbledon Common, which corresponds perfectly with the story of how the Wombles came to be. When Beresford took her daughter Kate for a walk on the same common, the young girl mispronounced it as 'Wombledon', and the rest is history.

---

**'There is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*'**

---

Though we have moved on in terms of animation styles and childhood heroes, there is still much to be appreciated and even learned from *The Wombles*. Back in 1973, Britain didn't have recycling bins and nationwide initiatives to reduce waste, making the Womble mission to "make good use of bad rubbish" an almost revolutionary concept.

The seven Wombles, including Great Uncle Bulgaria, Orinoco and Madame Cholet, were highly creative in the way they recycled and gathered rubbish – even fronting a Keep Britain Tidy campaign – and would certainly be applauded by environmental activists today.

So let's mark their half-century on our television screens not just by introducing our children to their adorable 35 mini-adventures – and, of course, their hit theme tune *The Wombling Song* – but also by passing on their teachings.

From Wimbledon Common and beyond, let's keep making "good use of bad rubbish".



# Know YOUR snow!

Who doesn't like that crunching noise as you walk on a patch of fresh snow? And what place doesn't look a little prettier with snowy roofs and trees? But what exactly is snow, and how does it happen?

## WHAT'S SNOW MADE FROM?

When it's 0°C or under, the water vapour in clouds freezes into minute ice crystals. These crystals stick together. And if enough of them do it, they become heavy enough to fall out of the cloud and float to the ground as snowflakes.

## HOW COLD DOES IT HAVE TO BE TO SNOW?

It won't snow unless it's 2°C or under. The snow will be powdery if the temperature is 0°C or below and the air is dry. When the temperature's slightly warmer and the atmosphere is moist, the flakes will be bigger because they melt around the edges and stick together. This sort of snow is perfect for making snowballs and snowmen.

## WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SNOW, SLEET AND HAIL?

If the water vapour in the clouds freezes but the air temperature exceeds 2°C, the snowflakes melt and become sleet. At around 5°C, it'll become rain. Hail forms in thunderclouds when water droplets are blown up to the tops of the cloud, where they freeze. When the updraughts in the thunderclouds can't hold up the frozen droplets, they fall to the ground as hailstones.

## WHAT DO SNOWFLAKES LOOK LIKE?

Under a microscope, snowflakes can look very different from each other. It all depends on how the ice crystals form and stick together. In 1951, the International Commission on Snow and Ice divided snowflakes into seven main types. These are plates, stellar crystals, columns, needles, spatial dendrites, capped columns and irregular forms.

*Snow there you have it!*



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# HOW TO CHOOSE THE PERFECT BATH TOWELS

With so many different types of bath towels available on the market, it can be difficult to know which to choose. Here's everything you need to know about picking the perfect towels for your home.

### CHECK THE FIBRE CONTENT

The first thing you need to look at when buying new towels is the fibre content. If you want a towel that is super-soft and absorbent, then 100 per cent cotton is the best choice. While you may be tempted by premium options such as Egyptian cotton, these are a lot more expensive and don't have much effect on the overall quality. If you are on a tight budget, opt for a cotton/polyester blend.

### UNDERSTAND THE LINGO

Towel lingo can be confusing, so here are a few key phrases to look out for:

- > **COMBINED COTTON** – this is where the cotton is brushed to remove short fibres, resulting in a softer and more durable towel.
- > **RING SPUN COTTON** – this means that long and short fibres are tightly twisted to make the towel loops strong and smooth.
- > **TWIST** – a high twist results in a more durable

towel and a low twist makes the towel more plush and absorbent.

### LOOK AT THE TOWEL

Although you may think that touching the towel will help you determine its overall quality, manufacturers apply special finishes to make them feel softer. Instead, visually inspect the towel and make sure the edges are neatly folded and secured with close stitching.

### CONSIDER THE WEIGHT

Towel weight is measured in grams per square metre (GSM), with the higher the weight, the denser and more absorbent the towel. A lightweight towel is 300-400 GSM, medium weight is 400-600 GSM, and 600-900 GSM is the heaviest.

### KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

Ultimately, choosing a towel is down to personal preference. If you want a soft and absorbent towel, then look for 100 per cent cotton, plush loops of yarn on the surface and a higher GSM. However, if you need a more durable or quick-drying towel, a cotton/poly blend with short loops and a lower GSM is a better choice.





HOME & DIY

# CELLAR DWELLER

**NO MATTER HOW DARK IT SEEMS, ANY BASEMENT IS A GIFT IN THESE SPACE-SPARSE TIMES**

When space is at a premium, dig down. Both modern homes and those dating back hundreds of years have benefitted from the extra space offered by a basement. Here are a few ideas for how to use the space:

### MAN CAVE

A man's home is his castle and a man's cave is his, err, cave. Even the dreariest space can become a great hangout spot for the lesser-spotted male. Just add a neon light, a pool table and some kind of beer conduit for maximum happiness for most men.

### UTILITY ROOM

If you can plumb a washing machine into your basement, then you're in business. Anyone who has lived with laundry clogging up every available radiator will confirm that a dedicated washing and drying space is the future. Just make sure the room is well ventilated to avoid damp.

### HOME GYM

What could be a better use of your excess space than creating a home gym? It's the perfect place to disappear to when the world gets too much. With a few weights, a punchbag, a bench press and maybe even a rowing machine, the humble basement becomes a sanctuary of transformation.

### OFFICE

If you're easily distracted, then a below-ground office is a good way to focus on what matters. Invest in reliable Wi-Fi, a comfy office chair and art that inspires you – especially if windows are scarce. You might be surprised by how your productivity soars.

### WINE CELLAR

It may be an obvious use of an underground space, but a wine cellar is vital for the kind of enthusiasts who like to buy in bulk and let their investment age in both price and flavour.

### HOME CINEMA

If you've got a big, blank wall, then a home cinema may just be the thing that elevates your home to A-list level. Popcorn machine optional.



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HOME & DIY



## 5 STYLISH WAYS TO STORE COOKBOOKS

Whether you can't resist treating yourself to the latest celebrity cookbook or you were gifted a few culinary classics at Christmas, you may be wondering how you can store and showcase your latest additions.

### LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE BACKSPLASH

If you want to proudly display your collection of cookbooks for all to see, then why not line them all up in a row against your backsplash? Providing easy access and a visually appealing feature, this is a great option for all kitchens.

### ADD BUILT-IN SHELVES TO THE ISLAND

A kitchen island provides the perfect space for storing all your favourite cookbooks, especially if you have a vast collection. Choose to either take advantage of existing shelving or incorporate new storage space that accommodates all your books.

### STORE THEM IN THE PANTRY

Pantries are a godsend for many families, providing additional space and somewhere to keep items out of sight. If you're lucky enough to have one in your home, then designate an eye-level shelf for your cookbook collection so that all your favourite recipes are within reach.

### DISPLAY YOUR FAVOURITE WITH A BOOK HOLDER

If you have a go-to cookbook that you use on a regular basis, you can keep this on display at all times using a simple book holder. Enabling you to create the perfect culinary focal point in your kitchen, you can even prop the book open at your favourite recipe.

### INVEST IN A MULTI-TIER BASKET STAND

For smaller kitchens where space is tight, a vertical storage solution such as a multi-tier basket stand is the ideal choice. There are many different styles and sizes on the market or, alternatively, you could create your own if you have a set of storage baskets lying around your home.

Photo credit: Blues Cooper Design, Studio Peake, Neat by Megi, Amy Letwinik at Interior Impressions, Ascan





# Awesome décor, dude!

It's time to get groovy with your home décor, as 70s style makes a humungous comeback. To many, it's the era that fashion forgot, but are we due a 70s revolution, five decades on?

### Appliances that pop

If you've ever coveted a Smeg toaster or fridge, you'll appreciate the allure of a coloured appliance. Surfy blue or pastel pink, it all works when integrating this bodacious trend into your worktop or (not-so) white goods.

### Hey crochet

Crochet may be one of the oldest artforms, but in the 70s it was really hot – like, all over your bellbottoms, tablecloth and curtains hot. So don't fear as it makes a long-awaited comeback – perfect for placemats or to protect your coffee tabletop. Crochet away knowing you are bang on trend, my friend.

### Rattan again

Think rattan furniture is only for the outdoors? Not so in the swinging 70s. Rattan is cool, rattan is comfy and rattan is also reasonably cheap if you're on a budget.

### Velvet underground

Velvet gets a rough ride. Synonymous with a certain type of 70s cinema, you may think velvet has a sleazy reputation. That is, until you remember that it is gloriously soft and cosy and comes in all kinds of sumptuous colours.

### Lino Ritchie

Don't be dancing on the ceiling when you have some lovely lino to tap your toes on. That's right, lino is cool again, so say: "Hello, is it me you're looking floor?"

### Don't teak

Those of us lucky to inherit teak sideboards from family members can now feel smug. Any unit made in teak rosewood by G Plan or crafted in Denmark during the 70s, is now rather valuable and effortlessly cool.



Photo credit: Smeg Facebook, The Spruce/Margot Cavlin, pavementvintage.co.uk



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# TILE *and smile*

## HOW TO CHECK IF YOUR ROOF TILES ARE KEEPING OUT THE ELEMENTS IN WINTER

Roof tiles are said to last for anything between 30 and 50 years which, considering the battering they take from weather conditions, is a notable achievement.

However, while we may think we can leave our roofing materials to their own devices, proper and regular maintenance of these terracotta, clay, concrete, slate and metal tiles is essential – after all, without them, we would be living a rather soggy existence.

They are most susceptible to damage after a storm, though can be compromised even from birds dropping stones from above.

Here are four ways to check your roof tiles are still in order.

### GROUNDING

Look around your garden and pathways for any fragments of tiles that have slipped from your roof.

If you find anything on ground level that should be on the roof, you have a problem.

### SPY

Get a pair of binoculars and examine the roof from a reasonable vantage point. This is an easy way to spot chipped or cracked tiles. Once the deterioration begins, the damage will only worsen over time, so it's vital to get this repaired as soon as possible.

### MOSS BROS

You may also spy moss or green matter on the roof – this is a key indication that water is remaining in gaps and not running into gutters.

### INSIDE OUT

In daylight hours, get up in your loft and into the eaves. By looking out through the roof, you will spot gaps or holes in tiles and can direct a professional to where cracked or damaged tiles need replacing.

It's best to let professionals attend to any tile repairs. They have all the necessary insurance and safety knowledge that ensures the job will be done without any mishaps.



HOME & DIY





# PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

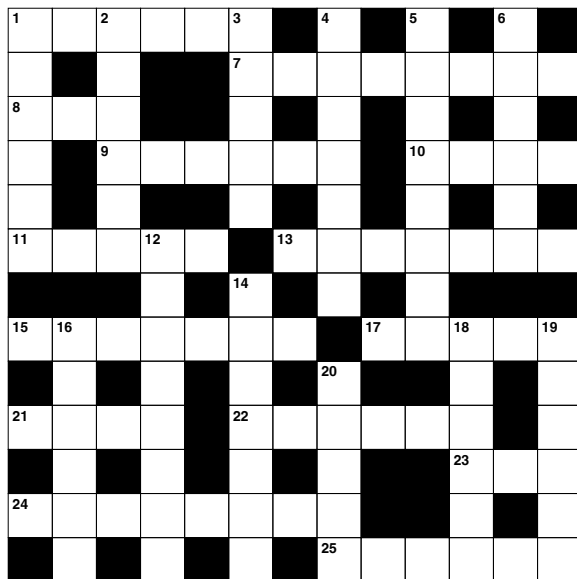
Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

## ACROSS

- Mexican cloak (6)
- Swamping (8)
- Belgian town (3)
- Of the immediate past (6)
- Place with temporary accommodation (4)
- Standards (5)
- Sharply (7)
- Give up (7)
- Draw or bring out (5)
- Percussion instrument (4)
- Popular round fruits (6)
- Annoy (3)
- Non-functioning period (8)
- Thin candles (6)

## DOWN

- Points (anag) (6)
- Closer (6)
- Proposal; suggestion (5)
- Act of touching (7)
- Taught (8)
- Hard tooth coating (6)
- Memorial (8)



- Pertaining to plants (7)
- Subatomic particle such as a nucleon (6)
- Bearlike (6)
- Calls forth (6)
- Surprise result (5)

## DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Valentine's Day was first declared a holiday by a pope. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I made the feast of Saint Valentine an official holiday.
- ▶ The first known official celebration of Saint Valentine's Day took place in Paris on February 14, 1400.
- ▶ Each year, 10 per cent of all marriage proposals happen on February 14.
- ▶ Around 25 million Valentine's cards are sent in the UK every year.
- ▶ UK pet owners will spend £200million on Valentine's gifts for their animals.
- ▶ Valentine's Day is the second biggest 'event' of the year following Christmas. It is estimated that the UK will spend around £880million on Valentine's Day.

Facts courtesy of Funky Pigeon

## SUDOKU

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

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# LOCAL NEWS

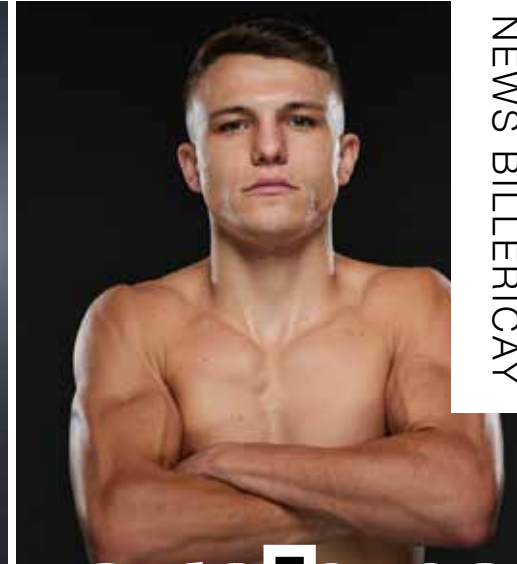
*from your neighbourhood*



LOCAL NEWS BILLERICICAY



Photo credit: Matchroom Boxing



## Young boxer signs important multi-fight deal

George Liddard (pictured above), the 20-year-old Billericay-born boxing prodigy, has signed a multi-fight promotional deal with Eddie Hearn's Matchroom Boxing.

Liddard, who represented the Billericay and Wickford All Boxing Club as an amateur, went on to clinch four national titles and two international gold medals before deciding to turn professional last year.

His professional career started perfectly, with a two-round defeat of Bosnia and Herzegovina's Nikola Matic on the undercard of Dillian Whyte v Jermaine Franklin at Wembley's OVO Arena in November 2022.

Now trained by two-time lightweight world title challenger Kevin Mitchell at the Matchroom Boxing Elite Gym, Liddard is hoping his Wembley debut will be the start of a special and successful journey.

Liddard said: "Signing for Matchroom has been a

dream for me since I was only a young lad of about 12. Matchroom is the biggest promotional company in the world and it's very local to me with me being a Billericay boy.

"I'm very grateful for the opportunity and I'm looking forward to boxing on some big shows and putting on some great performances.

"With Matchroom and my team of Kevin Mitchell and Tony Sims behind me, I'm confident I can go all the way in the sport and fulfil my full potential."

Matchroom Sport chairman Eddie Hearn said: "I'm delighted to welcome talented middleweight prospect George Liddard to the Matchroom Boxing team.

"George gave us a taster of what he's all about during his impressive debut win and I'm excited to see how his young professional journey develops under the guidance of Kevin Mitchell and Tony Sims."





Photo credit: Nikki Hayes Photography

# Blues beat youth team in unusual cup tie

In one of the strangest cup ties in history, Billericay Town FC Women beat their own development side 11-1 in the BBC Essex Women's Cup Quarter-Final on Sunday, January 15.

The Blues senior side saw both Zoe Rushen and Ruby Sealey score hat-tricks, with Billericay Town Women giving Player of the Match awards to players from both sides.

The Blues also maintained their strong FA Women's National League South form, with the team losing only once since the start of October.

A 5-0 win away over Crawley Wasps, including two

goals from Ruby Sealey, left Billericay Town in joint second in the league, although nine points behind currently unbeaten Oxford United.

Meanwhile, Billericay Town FC men made it six games unbeaten with a 5-1 win at home over Kingstonian FC on Saturday, January 21, taking the Blues up to 7th in the league.

The Blues have also had their BBC Essex Senior Cup game confirmed, with Billericay drawn away to Isthmian League Premier Division leaders Hornchurch FC on January 31. The two last played each other in November, with the Urchins earning a 3-0 win.

# MP reports £45,000 in secondary earnings

John Baron, MP for Basildon and Billericay (pictured right), has received more than £45,000 in donations, gifts, benefits and non-Parliamentary earnings since December 19, 2019.

UK law requires MPs to declare any donations or gifts they receive in connection with their political activities, with Mr Baron MP declaring income from four sources.

The largest was £28,820 in earnings from *The Financial Times*, alongside £11,980 in earnings from Baron and Grant Investment Management, £2,980 from The British Council and £1,580 in earnings from Pearson Education.

During this Parliament, Mr Baron MP has been or is an officer of 11 All-Party Parliamentary Groups (APPG), informal groups of MPs and peers organised around particular issues. Like MPs, these APPGs can receive donations and benefits.

Since the end of 2019, three of the 11 APPGs he is or has been an officer of have received no outside funding, while the other eight have collectively taken in just under £375,000.

Mr Baron MP has been contacted for comment.



Photo credit: UK Parliament

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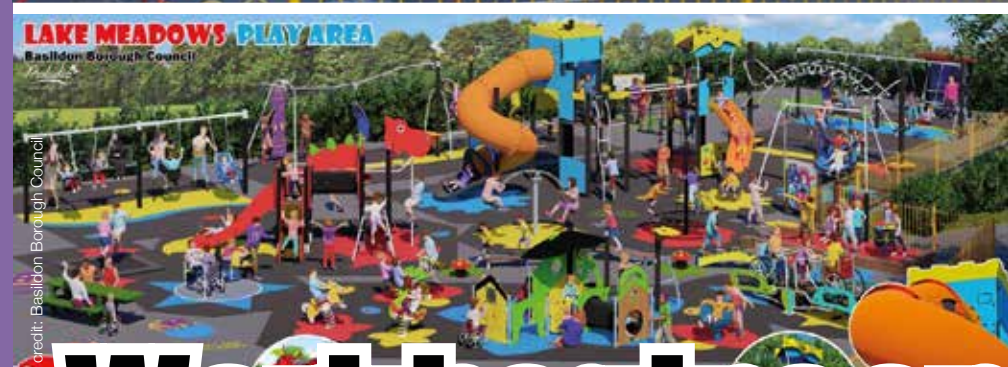


Photo credit: Basildon Borough Council

# Work begins on park's new play facility

Work has started on a new play area in Lake Meadows in Billericay that will provide space for more than 180 children to play together.

The new facility comes in year two of Basildon Borough Council's Play Review, a 10-year programme of approximately £9million worth of investment in the borough's play areas.

The design, developed with residents, was chosen in July following a shortlist and face-to-face consultations. The new play area is expected to open at the end of February or beginning of March.

Councillor Jeff Henry, Basildon Borough Council's cabinet member for health, wellbeing, leisure, arts and culture, said: "We want to make sure our borough's youngsters have the best play facilities available to them locally – and that will certainly be the case for visitors to Lake Meadows when this play area opens."

"Our Play Review has meant modern, high-quality play areas have already been built and are being enjoyed by the community at a number of sites, and we're investing £900,000 a year to continue that over the next eight years."

## New method to pay for parking is launched

An electronic payment system has been introduced in three car parks in Billericay.

The MiPermit system means drivers will no longer have to pay with cash at a ticket machine. Instead, they can pay through a mobile app or by scanning a QR code on one of the pay and display machines. Step-by-step instructions are displayed on all payment machines.

The new system is available at the council-owned car parks in Lake Meadows, Radford Crescent and

Billericay High Street.

Councillor Kevin Blake, Basildon Borough Council's cabinet member for the environment and carbon reduction, said: "This improvement to our car park payment system will make the machines more accessible for residents. Visitors to the borough's car parks will now have more choice to be able to pay in the way which is most convenient for them."

The MiPermit smartphone app is available to download on both the App Store and Google Play.

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Photo credit: Councillor Anthony Hedley

# Road goes a year without needed repairs



Essex Highways says a residential road does not "require urgent repair" in spite of the pleas of a Billericay councillor.

Billericay West councillor Anthony Hedley (pictured inset), who first posted about Hillhouse Drive in January 2022, has continued to share his interactions with the Essex road authority on Facebook.

The authority has repeatedly refused to carry out repair work despite numerous complaints.

According to the Essex Highways defect tracker, Hillhouse Drive has numerous footway, kerb and carriageway defects.

In January 2023, cllr Hedley received a response from Essex Highways which said: "Essex Highways

have advised that they are aware of carriageway defects in Hillhouse Drive, however they do not require urgent repair."

An Essex Highways spokesperson said: "We look after 5,000 miles of roads. It is one of the largest road networks in the country, with a mix of urban and rural roads, which each bring their own challenges.

"In order to maximise our resources, we have to prioritise our work and fix higher-risk issues first.

"All defects reported to us are assessed by an inspector and prioritised accordingly. If a defect is deemed dangerous, it will be made safe.

"Residents can let us know about dangerous roads at [www.essexhighways.org/tell-us](http://www.essexhighways.org/tell-us)"

# Residents named in New Year Honours List

Two Billericay residents have been named in King Charles III's first New Year Honours List.

Charlotte Cloughton, senior project leader for the refurbishment of the Elizabeth Tower, has been awarded an MBE for services to Parliament.

The £80million refurbishment of the Tower, better known as Big Ben, began in 2017 and has seen urgent repairs carried out, as well as the gold details repainted and the original Prussian blue clock hands restored to their former glory.

Meanwhile, Russell James Lord, a talented jeweller,

has been awarded a BEM for his services to charity.

Mrs Jennifer Tolhurst, Lord-Lieutenant of Essex, said: "Without people such as those who are honoured, our lives, our county and country would be much the poorer.

"But these honours reflect and recognise only a small part of the huge contribution made by many who work tirelessly for their communities.

"I would encourage anyone who knows someone who makes a big difference to others in their community to nominate them for an honour."



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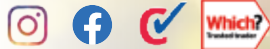


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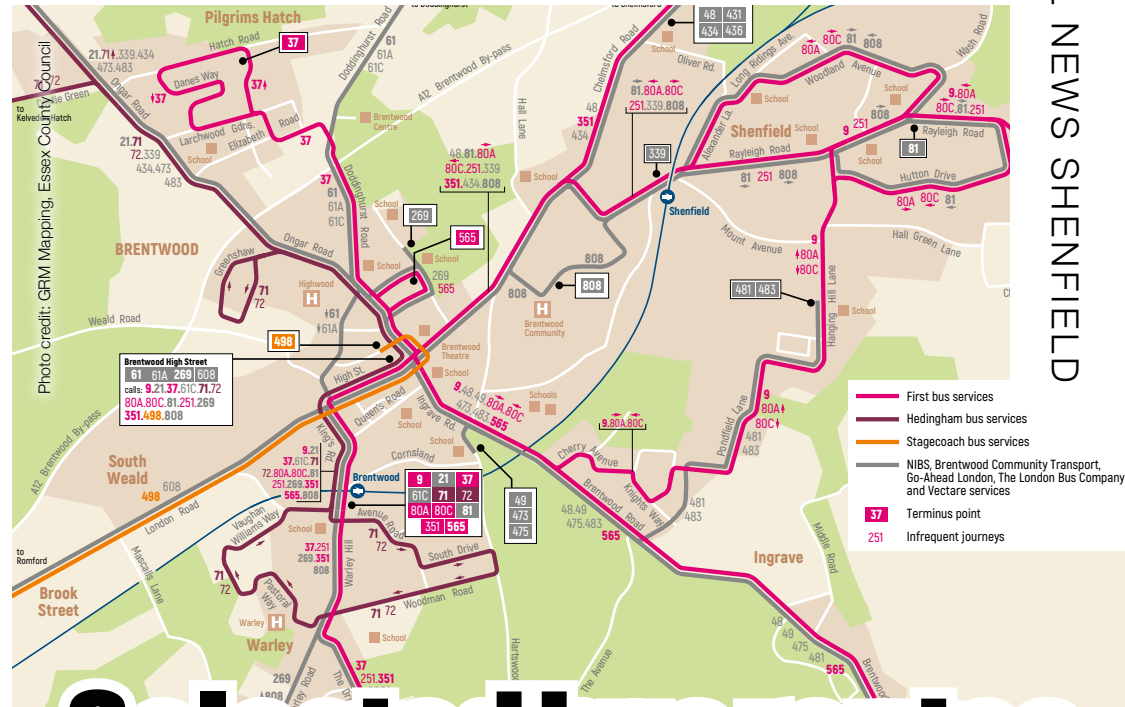
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# LOCAL NEWS

*from your neighbourhood*

LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD



# Selected bus routes capped at £2 to help residents

Selected bus routes, including some in Shenfield, will be capped at £2 for a single fare as part of the government's Help for Households initiative.

A number of journeys are included, such as route 8 with NIBSbuses, and the 80A, 80C, 251 and 351 with First Essex.

The discounted fares are available for a three-month period, from January 1 until March 31.

The government estimates that the average single fare for a three-mile journey costs £2.80, meaning passengers would save almost 30 per cent.

Buses Minister Richard Holden MP said: "Bus travel remains the most popular form of public transport in

England, making up around half of all journeys. That's why we're investing £60million to cap single bus fares at £2 to support every passenger and help get people back on the bus.

"With the scheme set to take two million car journeys off the road, it's fantastic to see so many bus operators signing up to the fare cap, helping people to 'get around for £2' between January 1 and March 31."

The government has invested £60million in the Help for Households initiative, which aims to help the public with cost-of-living pressures.

To see the full list of routes included, visit [www.gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap#east-of-england](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/2-bus-fare-cap#east-of-england)

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# BURGHART for BRENTWOOD



Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar

LOCAL NEWS SHENFIELD

The Spread Eagle pub in Brentwood has undergone a £270,000 refurbishment in recent months, and I was pleased to be invited by the manager, Craig Newbury (pictured right), and his boss, Jon Dale from Punch Pubs and Co, to visit the premises to find out how the business is doing.



The Spread Eagle is on Queen's Road at the back of St Thomas of Canterbury Church. It is a popular haunt for Brentwood town centre workers who can walk through the church graveyard from the High Street for a lunchtime drink, an evening out at the end of the week, or as a stop-off on the walk down to Brentwood Station at the end of the day. It seems the increase in the numbers of people working from home has also helped trade, with Thursday and Friday night socialising taking place in the local pub, rather than up in the city.

this has had a significant impact on business costs. It was very helpful to be able to hear from Jon and Craig about the outlook for the sector, how government support has helped it over the past few years, and the challenges it faces.

Naturally, I had to partake in the traditional 'MP pulls pint in pub' picture (with my pint-pulling skills attracting polite derision from the professionals). I will stick to draft bills, not draught beer.

The last three years have been tough for the pub trade, with a lengthy pandemic lockdown followed by various tiers of COVID-19 rules about social distancing and being limited to a pint with food.

As with all businesses, the increase in energy costs came just as all COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and

## Council launches nature walks



Brentwood Borough Council has announced a series of free health walks in Shenfield and Brentwood throughout the year.

Every Monday from March until the end of November, gentle walks in Hutton Country Park will be held, starting at 11am and taking 30 to 40 minutes.

Other walks are available in the Brentwood area throughout the week, including in King George's Playing Fields, Doddinghurst and Merrymeade House.

In a statement, Brentwood Borough Council said: "Walking is about friendship, health, wellbeing, heritage, community and self-worth.

"We have a range of health walks to suit all abilities and backgrounds. The walks are in partnership with Trailnet CIC, and are offered from Monday to Friday."

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HISTORY

# WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOOTBALL POOLS?

Back in 1961, Viv Nicholson won more than £152,000 (around £3.5million in today's money) on the football pools. She promised to "spend, spend, spend". And that's what she did, splurging on luxuries like a pink Cadillac and exotic holidays before the money dried up.

The pools were launched 100 years ago this month, and in its heyday, 14 million people took part each week, hoping to win a fortune. Here's how it all started.

Football became increasingly popular in the years after the First World War, but betting on match results was illegal.

Liverpudlian telegraph operator Sir John Moores CBE, eager to make money, heard about a system devised by John Jervis Barnard from Birmingham. The idea was that punters bet on the outcome of matches, with the winnings coming from the 'pool' of money gambled – minus 10 per cent to cover 'management costs'.

But Barnard's business was failing. Moores and two of his friends reckoned they could do better and started distributing coupons outside Manchester United's football ground. To take part, punters had to predict 'score draws' – games that would end in a draw with at least one goal. Because Moores claimed it was a game of skill and only accepted postal orders, not cash, he managed to get around strict gambling laws.

At first, the new company lost money, and Moores' friends gave up. But Moores' wife said she'd "rather be married to a man haunted by failure than one haunted by regret". So Moores carried on – and less than a decade later had earned £1million (£82million in today's money).

Moores, who was knighted in 1980, died aged 97 in 1993. A year later, the National Lottery was set up, and the popularity of the pools faded. While you can still play the game online, there are now easier ways to dream big – without predicting football scores.

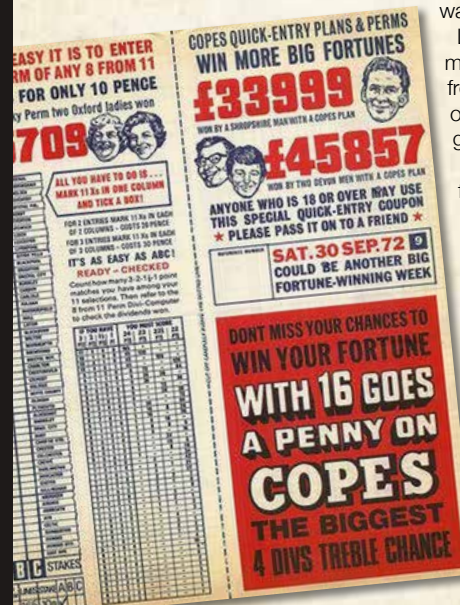



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# BRACE

## WHY THE ERA OF THE BRACELET IS COMING BACK, FOR BOTH MEN AND WOMEN

For some of us, bracelets may be confined to our youths, conjuring memories of an armful of neon bangles, faded friendship bracelets and even the odd festival wristband. And yet bracelets are fast becoming a hot fashion statement once more, for both sexes.

In recent years, much of this resurging trend can be credited to high street jewellery brand Pandora, whose signature heart clasp snake chain bracelet graces the wrists of tens of thousands of women in the UK.

Making the ideal gift for any woman in your life, the bracelet's genius lies not in its simple and stylish design, but in the hundreds of different charms that can be added to it, making it utterly unique to the wearer. From Mother's Day motifs, birthstones and even special edition collaborations – *Harry Potter*, *Disney* and *Star Wars* to name a few – there really is

a charm for every occasion.

For men, Pandora sells a range of stylish leather bands that can be adorned with charms. There is also a wealth of online retailers selling beautiful wristwear that can be engraved with a personalised message or child's name. More stylish than a 'best dad in the world' key fob, bracelets are a modern and fashionable way for a father or husband to wear a token of love.

Even the humble friendship bracelet has had a makeover in recent times, with jewellers such as Oliver Bonas and Monica Vinader creating woven cord bands that almost look homemade, were it not for the solid gold beading or diamond-studded charms that adorn them.

In short, the bracelet is the ideal fashion accessory for those who prefer something a little more understated, while still boasting sartorial kudos.

# YOURSELF







# DYNAMIC

## Davina

**HOW DAVINA MCCALL CONTINUES TO PROVE HERSELF AS A MODERN NATIONAL TREASURE**

**D**avina McCall this year celebrates three decades on our screens. From her early break – a female voice dubber for Channel 4’s Friday night sleaze bonanza *Eurotrash* – through *Don’t Try This at Home*, *Streetmate*, *The BRIT Awards*, *Big Brother*, *Stars in Their Eyes*, *The Million Pound Drop*, *Long Lost Family* and so many more, the now 55 year old has remained relevant, resplendent and always radiant on our screens.

The Wimbledon-born presenter, who has just returned as a judge in the fourth series of *The Masked Singer*, is immaculate in her appeal to multiple age groups and all genders. She carries a confidence and assurance that is effortless and puts contestants at ease, while also knowing when to reveal a more sensitive and emotional side to her character.

From uncovering her ancestry in *Who Do You Think You Are?* to fronting documentaries on the language of love and the mental pain of the menopause, Davina is truly one of terrestrial TV’s modern national treasures. At a time when our broadcasters are desperate for consistency and longevity in the face of competition from streaming channels, Davina continues to provide an enduring and vital influence.

“I’ve just tried to present in a way that feels genuine and accessible,” says Davina, who is currently in a relationship with hairdresser Michael Douglas, having previously been married twice. She has three children – Holly, 21, Tilly, 19, and Chester, 16.

“I am incredibly grateful to have been given the opportunity to sustain my career with new and exciting shows and concepts.

“I don’t doubt it’s probably time to step to one side and let some others have a go, but I’ll keep on going until I’m told I’m not needed anymore, because TV still gives me the feeling of having the time of my life, and that’s very special to me.”

The fact that Davina is someone not just admired by the general public, but trusted too, is arguably what’s behind the success of her latest book. In *Menopausal*, she discusses the apparent embarrassment, shame and fear behind the change, blowing away perceptions and encouraging openness and discussion about the subject.

This isn’t the first time the presenter has been vocal about life’s true challenges. In her own autobiography, she lifted the lid on the highs and lows she has encountered, including drug addiction and a fractured relationship with her mother.

The presenter has also been outspoken recently in criticising the trend for cancel culture. Speaking on entrepreneur Steven Bartlett’s podcast, *The Diary of a CEO*, she slammed the failure of those in the public eye to express real feelings for fear of finding work projects binned or sidelined. She added: “No one says what they think or believe anymore.”

If anyone can put a sense of honesty back into the discourse, it’s Davina. Never one to shy away from deliberation or debate, she refuses to toe the media line.

In fact, while the brilliant brunette has contributed so much to UK culture over the past three decades, it could be said that her most important work is yet to come...





# Are you looking for an **ECO HOME?**

## IS THE GRASS ALWAYS GREENER WHEN IT COMES TO ECO HOMES?

We live in an era of eco sustainability in our homes, yet is eco design all it's cracked up to be, and do the negatives balance the positives for conscious consumers looking to create a home that has environmental excellence at its heart? Here, we look at the pros and cons of green homes.

### PROS OF ECO HOMES

> **Cost:** The trend for going green with our homes is supported wholeheartedly by local government. That means grants, subsidies and initiatives will bring certain costs down. If your structure benefits from elements such as rainwater harvesting and solar panels, your running costs will undoubtedly be lower than for a standard home.

> **The planet:** Prioritising the homes in which we live can also help us feel as though we are playing a part in the bigger picture. After all, the commitments we make now are setting up the next generation for a better life.

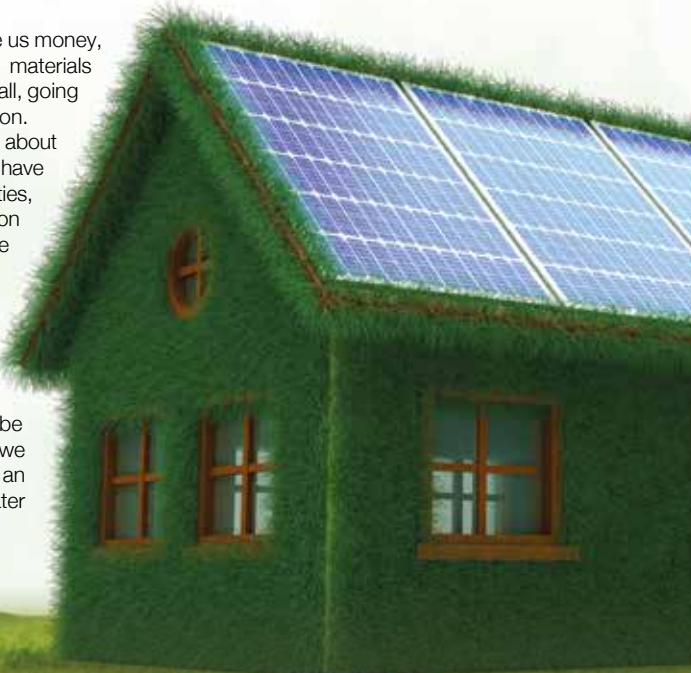
> **Regulations:** Future-proofing our homes for rules and regulations that may come about in the years ahead means we are investing now rather than paying further down the line.

### CONS OF ECO HOMES

> **Cost:** While green initiatives can save us money, the sourcing of some eco-friendly materials comes at a higher upfront cost. After all, going green is very rarely the cheapest option.

> **Longevity:** While we know a lot about standardised building materials that have helped us map out huge communities, some of the newer green fabrication technologies are untested over the long term. Without the benefit of longevity testing, they may be more liable to having to be replaced or repaired as time goes on.

> **Ratio:** While every environmental action makes a difference, the cost of investing in our homes may be at the expense of green initiatives we can undertake elsewhere (like buying an electric car) that would make a greater overall impact.



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Solicitor  
jaspreetpannu@mplaw.co.uk



**Yvonne Taiwo**  
Family Law Paralegal  
yvonnetaiwo@mplaw.co.uk

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# 5 BENEFITS OF CO-WORKING

**D**o you want to foster a flexible and collaborative company culture? Make networking a breeze and promote innovation? If yes, then you need to know all about co-working spaces and how they can revolutionise your business. And if you're wondering what co-working is, it simply means that staff from different companies share the same office space.

spaces is that they are optimised for productivity and are designed to adapt to different working styles. They are also ideal for remote workers who want to get away from the distractions of home.

## NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

A co-working space provides the perfect space for networking. You can even find co-working spaces that hold networking events to help companies find new business partnerships.

## FLEXIBLE WORKING

In today's modern world, high-calibre candidates demand flexible working conditions. When you operate from a co-working space, your employees can create office hours that suit their schedule and yours. Plus, if you have a candidate who works outside your area, then a co-working space allows them to work for you without having to relocate.

## MORE COST-EFFECTIVE

When you rent a co-working space, you only have to pay for the areas that you plan to use. Furthermore, some co-working offices come with additional perks such as on-site cleaning staff and printing services at no additional cost. Co-working spaces are also great for small businesses that want to grow without the pressure of committing to a long-term lease.

## MORE CREATIVITY

Co-working spaces offer both private and shared offices, with traditional cubicles replaced with bright and colourful meeting rooms that encourage maximum creativity, hot desks and expansive lounge areas.

## INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

What business doesn't want to see an increase in productivity levels? The beauty of co-working



## ON THE MONEY

Financial advice from our financial adviser **Karyn Vogel**  
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## TAKE CONTROL NOW TO BEAT THE TAX CHILL

Following his controversial 'stealth tax' statement in November, the Chancellor made a raft of key personal taxation and pension announcements.

The government pledged its commitment to the pensions triple lock, which will increase the State Pension in line with September's Consumer Prices Index (CPI) rate of 10.1 per cent. This means that the value of the basic State Pension will increase in April 2023 from £141.85 per week to £156.20 per week, while the full new State Pension will rise from £185.15 to £203.85 per week.

Then came some 'stealth' announcements set to pull people into paying higher rates of tax, more people paying Inheritance Tax (IHT), a cut to tax-free earnings from dividends and a reduction Capital Gains Tax (CGT) allowances. In addition to the Dividend Allowance, CGT allowance and IHT freeze, other key personal tax announcements included:

- The Income Tax additional rate threshold (ART) at which 45p becomes payable will be lowered from £150,000 to £125,140 from April 6 2023. The ART for non-savings and non-dividend income will apply to taxpayers in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The ART for savings and dividend income will apply UK-wide. This move is set to push 250,000 more

people into this band.

- The Income Tax Personal Allowance and higher rate threshold are to remain at current levels – £12,570 and £50,270 respectively – until April 2028 (rates and thresholds may differ for taxpayers in parts of the UK where Income Tax is devolved).

With an increasing number of people likely to be impacted by these changes, we can't stress enough the importance of tax year end planning. Although some of these changes don't come in with immediate effect, it is vital to ensure you are in the best place possible to take advantage of any allowances, exemptions and reliefs available this year and to prepare for the changes that come in over the next few years. With plenty to consider and factor into your financial plan, valuable financial advice remains central to achieving your goals and aspirations.

**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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**It's time to make an LPA.** There is a common misconception that Lasting Powers of Attorney only need to be put in place when an individual gets older. In fact, it is always wise to put LPAs in place earlier in life. By doing so, you will gain peace of mind that your affairs – both financial and health – can be looked after if you are ever unable to do so. You will also be ensuring that your loved ones are not left in an impossible position, unable to deal with your affairs, if the worst should happen.

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TECHNOLOGY

# APPY DAYS



While our reliance on technology becomes greater every year, so too does our interaction with the world around us. For all the criticism levelled at them, our communications devices and, specifically, the apps on them, have offered us a far greater understanding of the world. With that in mind, here are five apps that offer you the chance to broaden your horizons in 2023.

## BACKDROP

Backdrop isn't a wallpaper app, as its name may suggest. Instead, it's a location discovery platform that aims to help you become more familiar with your surroundings. Rather than listing businesses and attractions, it turns the spotlight on interesting houses, colourful spaces and quirky local elements.

## CENTER STAGE

A US app that can instantly help you value trading cards. Although the technology is still in its infancy, with identifiable cards in the sports of NFL, baseball, basketball and hockey, the plan is to incorporate UK sports, as well as Pokémon and other games-based card collectables.

## OTTERNAL LIFE

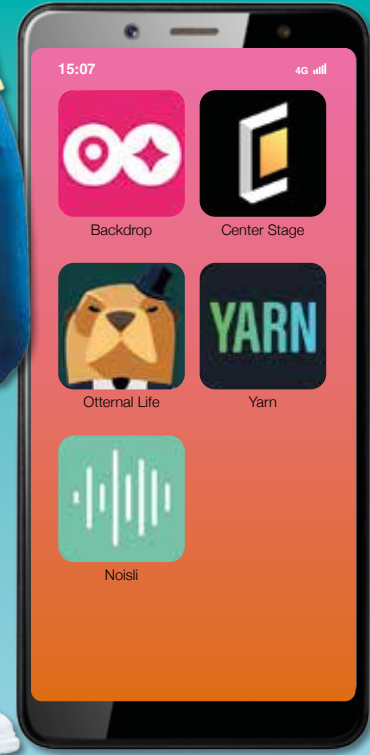
A habit-tracking app that goes well beyond the norm of health and fitness. Instead, Otternal Life gives you the opportunity to input everything from studies to collections, guiding you and reminding you of daily tasks, while helping you steer clear of temptation elsewhere.

## YARN

Go back to basics with this app that aims to help readers revisit the simple pleasures of storytelling. Rather than elaborate videos, films or animations, Yarn offers app users a simple choice of stories presented in text message form. Episodes and conversations are updated daily, and you can enjoy stories from several categories, including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and more.

## NOISLI

We can all recognise that our ability to concentrate is affected by the sounds around us. Noisli mixes together a number of samples and sounds, from birdsong to rain to waves to wind, to surround you with effortlessly excellent and personalised audio inspiration.





# Springing INTO LIFE

## THE CHANGES YOU NEED TO BE MAKING TO YOUR GARDEN BEFORE SPRING COMES AROUND

**W**e may bemoan dropping temperatures and wet weather, but the good news is that spring is edging ever closer. And while the realities of sunny mornings and technicoloured flower beds are still a distance away, we need to be preparing our outdoor spaces for spring now, if 2023 is to be a fertile year. Here are six ways you can start preparing your garden for the sunnier days to come.

**Plan and purchase:** There's nothing like planning the first steps on a task, so even though it's cold and wintry outside, now is the time to be selecting and ordering the summer-flowering bulbs and seeds that will make your garden look splendid. You'll be planting these in early spring, so get them ready now.

**Sow good:** Some of your summer seeds will require longer in the soil, so you may want to consider sowing some now. Included in these are geraniums, begonias, peppers and aubergines. Start them off in a heated propagator to give them a head start.

**Tip-top tidy-up:** It's cold out, but that shouldn't stop you getting beds and borders in order. Removing debris and decaying matter will be the biggest job, but consider the need to repair wood, cut back bushes, and give a new lease of life to paths and walkways.

**Green clean:** If you have a greenhouse, now is the time to take it back to its bare bones, ready for what you're about to bring in during the spring. A clear-out and clean-up will leave your transparent studio ready to go.

**The rain game:** You may as well take advantage of the rainy season by installing a water butt and collecting water in time for the spring. Not only is it better for the environment compared to using the tap or a hose, but a number of plant varieties actually grow better with rainwater, including camellias and rhododendrons.



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GARDENING

# FlowerPOWER

FOUR FANTASTIC FLOWER SHOWS IN THE UK TO LOOK OUT FOR IN 2023

There's nothing that feels more like summer than the blooming buds and luscious lawns of a flower show, and in the UK we're treated to an incredible array of events that cater for every type of green-fingered enthusiast.

**Harrogate Flower Show: April 20-23**  
One of the earliest shows on the calendar, this Yorkshire gem is great for children looking to build a knowledge of outside spaces, with a variety of activities designed to inspire young minds. For adults, there's the floral art marquee, the largest in Britain, as well as a wealth of displays and presentations – many with a practical edge.

**Chelsea Flower Show: May 23-27**  
A royal favourite, the Chelsea Flower Show represents the pinnacle of our horticultural passions in the UK, showcasing an array of award-winning designs, an abundance of experts and a wealth of demonstrations designed to

inspire. More than 150,000 people attend the show every year, so booking early is recommended.

**Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival: July 4-9**  
This festival claims to be the greatest flower show on Earth. Set in the grounds of Hampton Court Palace, with architecture, history, opulence and Britishness in abundance, it's difficult not to be wowed by beautiful show gardens, interactive activities for children, amazing flower displays and live music.

There's also shopping, demos and expert advice – offering a modern show in a traditional setting.

**Tatton Park Flower Show: July 19-23**  
If you fancy venturing up north, head to Knutsford in Cheshire for a flower show that is much more a garden party than an exhibition. With shopping, dining and music, the bamboozling range of horticultural heroics acts as a brilliant background to the party atmosphere. All you require is sunshine.

Photo credit: theenglishgarden.co.uk, yourharrogate.co.uk, EdinburghGarden.com, Shutterstock.com, Rishi Neil Herworth via housebeautiful.com



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# Spring is on its way –

and we have never needed it more!

At this time of year, most of us are eager for winter to end and for spring to arrive. Records suggest that recent Springs are occurring about 11 days earlier than they did a century ago, even though the promise of increasingly warm and bright days ahead seems a little way off following the recent cold snap.

Meteorologists hail the beginning of spring on the 1st March but in recent years we have had snow as late as March and April, and whilst the local kids might have welcomed the opportunity for a 'snow day', the keen gardeners amongst us might not have been quite so pleased, since drifted snow can crush delicate new plants, and the weight can even damage larger conifers or even garden structures like fences, sheds and greenhouses. This said, according to Royal Horticultural Society's (RHS) chief horticultural adviser Guy Barter, a blanket of snow later in the year is not always a bad thing, flowering bulbs can be delayed slightly, prolonging the flowering period and leading to a more impressive show as they all bloom together. You may even be treated to seeing hardy



spring flowers like primulas and anemones flowering alongside your hellebores and winter pansies as the late winter blooms are prolonged.

So, you have provided a bit of extra food for the winged garden visitors and mother nature seems to have the borders sussed giving you an even more colourful garden this spring -but where does this leave the hardscape elements of the garden? Well if your fence was groaning under the weight of drifted snow and struggling to stand against the accompanying icy winds then you could consider an alternative that is tougher than traditional wooden fencing – such as ColourFence. This type of fencing needs very little aftercare and can stand up to 130mph gusts leaving you more time

to knock the snow off the roof of the greenhouse! Oh and it makes for a very attractive decorative feature in your garden too.

Did you know too, that 'Astronomical Spring' is due a little later in March so maybe we can hope for some more sunshine then. Keep a look out for bumblebees and butterflies waking from their winter slumber, frog spawn in ponds and garden birds collecting nesting materials, all of which hail sunnier days to come!

And if you're not looking to replace a fence, but you're looking for a beautiful new gate, or garden rail to



add even more beauty to your Spring garden, we do those too, as well as garden sheds that also won't groan under the weight of a thousand April showers, some late snow and a gust or few of wind!

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PETS

# BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO OWNING A hamster

A HAMSTER IS A GREAT CHOICE FOR A FIRST PET, COMING IN A SMALL PACKAGE BUT DELIVERING LOTS OF FUN. HERE'S SOME TOP TIPS ON HOW TO CARE FOR THEM

## WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT BREEDS OF HAMSTERS?

There are 24 different species of hamsters, with the most popular ones for pets including the Syrian, Russian dwarf, Campbell's dwarf, and Roborovski.

## WHAT ENVIRONMENT DO HAMSTERS THRIVE IN?

Hamsters need a comfortable, dry and clean place to live. They do not like draughts or damp. Also, they need to be in a room where the lights go on and off at more or less the same time each day. As they are solitary animals, hamsters prefer to live alone but, with the right care, dwarf hamsters can be housed together.

## WHAT DO HAMSTERS EAT?

Hamsters need a good-quality, balanced diet that contains all the essential nutrients and minerals. They can get this from a compound pellet ration, a mixture of seeds and small quantities of greens, clean root vegetables and fruits.

## DO HAMSTERS NEED COMPANY?

Although hamsters are generally solitary animals and often showcase timid behaviour, they can enjoy interacting with people who handle them carefully. Hamsters can find the presence and scent of other pets stressful, so you should keep their cage away from other animals in the home.

## HOW TO KEEP YOUR HAMSTER HAPPY AND HEALTHY

A hamster needs to sleep undisturbed during the day and have plenty of space to play and exercise at night. They also need a deep layer of litter so that they can dig and construct a burrow. Many hamsters enjoy a running wheel.

## HAMSTER FACT FILE:

- > Hamsters can catch a cold from humans
- > Hamsters hoard their food
- > Hamsters' teeth never stop growing.







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# TEETHING TERRORS



KIDS

## HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR BABY IS TEETHING AND USEFUL TRICKS TO HELP THEM

It's one of the biggest anguishes for any parent – seeing a baby or child in pain and not knowing what to do about it.

One such pain that all our youngsters have to go through is teething, and while there's nothing you can do to stop those gnashers appearing, here are some useful tips for helping your child get through the discomfort.

### DETECTION

In babies, the appearance of drool – and lots of it – is a tell-tale sign that teeth are on their way. Many parents opt for the handy neck cravat to prevent clothes from getting soaked.

Also keep an eye out for your baby gnawing or chewing on any available surface, with red and sore gums showing that there's activity lurking below.

A loss of appetite can indicate dental pain, but perhaps the biggest signal is the distress, grumpiness, moaning and sleeplessness that accompanies this stage.

### HELP

We all look to quickfire solutions when our children are ill, but teething is something you have to let progress in its own time, so really your only option is to try to limit the discomfort. Paracetamol and ibuprofen will take the edge off pain, while a number of parents opt for teething powders.

A teething chew – usually made out of rubber or silicon, and which can be kept in the freezer for a great cooling sensation – will undoubtedly provide relief. Teething gel and even some frozen banana can also offer those troubled gums a bit of light relief.

Of course, the biggest cure of them all is one we can all give in abundance and is completely free every time – a nice big hug.







# How to make a warming BEAN & TOMATO SOUP

Set your pulse racing on World Pulses Day this February, with this delicious bean and tomato soup. It's thick, creamy and suitable for vegans. It's also an absolute doddle to make, though you will need a blender or food processor.

## BEAN AND TOMATO SOUP (Serves 4-6 people)

### You will need:

2 tbsp olive oil | 1 clove of garlic (minced) | ½ tsp dried oregano | ½ tsp dried thyme | ½ tsp fresh chopped rosemary | ¼ tsp chilli flakes | Heaped tbsp tomato purée | 1 tsp brown sugar | 400g tin of finely chopped tomatoes or sieved tomatoes (passata) | 500ml vegetable stock | 400g tin butter beans | Salt and pepper | Chopped parsley to decorate

### How to make:

- > Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan.
- > Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, rosemary and chilli flakes, and cook gently till the garlic is soft.
- > Add the tomato purée and sugar, and cook over a medium heat for 3-4 minutes.
- > Pour in the tomatoes and stock and give it a stir.

> In a blender, purée the beans with the liquid from the can till the mixture is completely smooth (if it seems very thick, add a tablespoon or two of water).

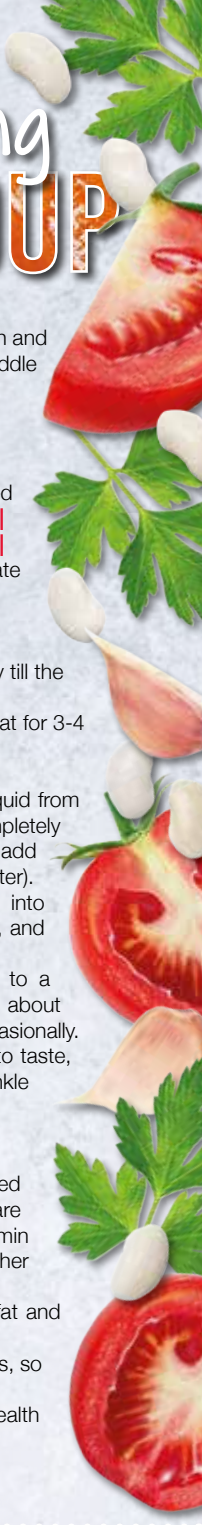
Pour the bean purée into the tomato mixture, and stir well.

- > Bring the mixture to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
- > Add salt and pepper to taste, pour into bowls, sprinkle with parsley, and enjoy.

### Health benefits of pulses:

- > Pulses – such as lentils, dried beans, peas and chickpeas – are a good source of protein, vitamin B, iron, zinc, potassium and other micronutrients
- > They are low in calories, low in fat and rich in fibre
- > They contain complex carbohydrates, so you feel fuller for longer
- > The fibre in pulses helps improve heart health and lowers blood cholesterol.

(Source, UN Food and Agriculture Organization, 2021)



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# FERRY GOOD



TRAVEL



## WHY OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH THE HUMBLE FERRY IS RETURNING, AND THE BENEFITS OF TRAVELLING ON ONE

**T**o many, the ferry brings back pre-Eurotunnel days when, barring the process of boarding an airplane, our only connection with mainland Europe and beyond was via boat or ferry.

The ease with which tunnelled travel (including the Eurostar) now connects us with Europe has diminished the slow, clunky, often clumsy nature of the ferry; yet in the past couple of COVID-affected years, we've once again embraced this old-school method of travel, and here's why:

### EXPERIENCE

Boarding a boat, particularly with a young family, can be a thrilling experience, with the excitement of setting sail and views across open seas. For a small child, arriving at a port bustling with industry and movement can be mesmerising. Effectively, your holiday starts as soon as you board the boat.

### COST

The cost of travel has risen across the board. While ferries are sometimes noted as being expensive, they can still be one of the most affordable methods to reach the mainland if you book off-peak and look around for promotions and offers. This is particularly

true if there are multiple people in one car.

### POST-COVID CONSIDERATIONS

Unlike aircraft, ferries offer ample space, with wide passenger areas, the privacy of your own vehicle when boarding and departing and, most importantly, access to ample fresh air.

### FACILITIES

While not quite at the grade of the cruise ship megavessels that roam our seas, many ferries have an assortment of cafés, restaurants, bars, music clubs, cinemas, entertainment lounges and, in some cases, even splash pools.

### LUGGAGE

Unlike most other modes of transport, there are no restrictions on luggage when taking a ferry. In short, if you can pack it, you can take it.

### RELIABILITY

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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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Did you know that most mass-produced toothpastes include ingredients that can be found in shampoos, soaps, hand sanitisers and even antifreeze? Not the most pleasant of thoughts, so why not consider a more natural way to clean your teeth?

Essential oils

Essential oils such as peppermint, cinnamon and eucalyptus are all known for their ability to improve your oral health. All you need to do is mix a few drops of essential oil with the same quantity of water and then use this liquid to clean your teeth.

Baking soda

Baking soda is highly effective at removing plaque and stubborn stains caused by coffee, wine and smoking. Simply dip your brush in baking soda and then brush your teeth as normal. Mix in a few drops of peppermint oil if you miss that minty fresh taste.

Coconut oil

Are you familiar with the term 'oil pulling'? This is an ancient oral health technique that involves swishing a tablespoon of a carrier oil around your mouth for up to 20 minutes a day. Research has shown that coconut oil used in this way can reduce plaque and fight gingivitis.

Sea salt

Salt is antibacterial, making it a good choice for removing bacteria, plus it has the ability to naturally whiten your teeth. As with baking soda, dip your brush in sea salt and then clean your teeth gently to avoid abrasion. Alternatively, mix with water to create a chemical-free mouthwash that can help to prevent gum disease and soothe toothache.

Turmeric

Although this bright yellow spice may not seem like the best solution for achieving shiny white teeth, it is actually highly beneficial for your oral health due to its anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-plaque properties. Create your own DIY turmeric toothpaste by mixing 1/4 tsp of turmeric powder with just enough mustard oil to make a paste. Brush and then rinse thoroughly.



# Dudbrook House

"Delivering Quality Elderly & Dementia Care"



From left to right: Paul Cunnah (MG Partnership), Donna Regan (Depty Manager Dudbrook Hall), Richard Keely (Lavingtons), Claire Watson (Director St Michaels Homes), Mitchell Fletcher (Horizon Construction London), Kerry Toulson (Manager Dudbrook Hall), Sean Watson (Director St Michaels Homes Ltd)

Work is fully underway in the development of our new care home project to construct Dudbrook House on the estate of Dudbrook Hall, a care home for the elderly located within beautiful park like gardens, surrounded by Essex countryside. The home is owned and run by St Michaels Homes Ltd.

St Michaels Homes Ltd was awarded planning permission to construct a new care home in the grounds of its existing care home Dudbrook Hall. The new improved Dudbrook House care home will provide improved facilities for residents and staff with state of the art accommodation. Works are planned to take 68 weeks from commencement and the grand opening of the new home is planned for mid-August 2023.

A family run business, St Michaels Homes Ltd was established by Managing Director Sheila Watson in 1991. Sheila trained as a registered nurse and midwife, followed by 25 years in midwifery, followed by five years as a health advisor to the elderly, and obtained a diploma in gerontology. With this experience care of residents comes from the top down, this can be seen by the way the residents are cared for by staff and quality inspections. The company

is now being operated by Sheila's children Sean & Claire Watson who are fully hands on with the successful running of its care homes and new build development. St Michaels Homes also operates another home next to this new development called Howard Lodge, which was also renewed in 2014 and is within walking distance of Dudbrook Hall, Howard



Lodge has been rated by CQC as Outstanding, so it now matches its facilities with its exceptional care.

Sean Watson, Director at St Michaels Homes Ltd said: "Due to the extensive three acre grounds we have around our care homes, these works will not affect the day to day running of the existing home. Our

commitment of care to our residents is our utmost priority and we are very excited about the plans for this impressive new care home.

We have a well-established reputation in the local and wider community for providing quality care and are proud to be a family run business. The A star care provided by our staff will now be matched by A-star facilities with the completion of the new home which will increase the much required bed capacity offered from the old home from 44 to 64. Dudbrook House will bring unrivalled facilities including spacious rooms – all with en-suite, as well as hairdressers, sun terrace, balconies, private patios, activities and training facilities, day care centre, coffee lounge for residents with dining and living rooms on each floor along with landscaped gardens and a dementia garden.

The new facilities will benefit all existing residents as well as providing increased space for newcomers welcomed to the home."



**Howard Lodge Care Centre,**  
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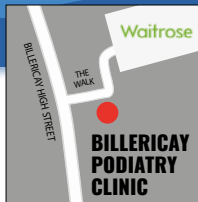
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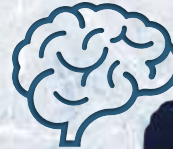
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HEALTH & FITNESS



**ARE YOU READY TO EMBRACE THE COLD WEATHER AND EXERCISE OUTSIDE THIS WINTER?**

While 'feel the burn' is a phrase you're likely to hear when it comes to physical activity, working out in cold temperatures comes with a whole host of benefits.

Read on to discover the top four reasons why you should exercise outside this winter.

### BURN MORE CALORIES

If you are looking to lose weight, then working outside in the winter can help you to achieve your goals. This is because colder temperatures force your body to work harder in order to regulate its core temperature. As your body works to get warm, your metabolism goes into overdrive and burns more calories and fat.

### BOOST YOUR IMMUNE SYSTEM

Bugs and viruses are everywhere in the winter months, so it can be a good idea to look at ways to boost your immune system. Not only can exercising outside help to fight off the symptoms of a cold, but it also forces your immune system to work harder.

### BETTER CARDIO WORKOUT

When you exercise in colder temperatures, your blood vessels narrow and your heart and lungs work harder. This means that you can enjoy an enhanced cardiovascular workout, which helps to maintain good heart health. Plus, you don't have to exercise for as long to enjoy the same results.

### IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH

If you are affected by Seasonal Affective Disorder, which makes you feel down during the darker months of the year, then exercising outside can help to boost your mood. In fact, research suggests that a good workout can be four times more effective than taking antidepressants in improving the symptoms of depression. Getting outside can also help to replenish your vitamin D levels.



**FEEL THE CHILL!**





# Humidifier HERO

**D**o you suffer with a dry complexion? Or maybe it's ageing skin that's your main concern? Either way, a humidifier has the ability to transform the look and feel of your skin in a matter of weeks.

### WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF USING A HUMIDIFIER FOR YOUR SKIN?

#### 1. Reduce water loss

If you suffer with dry or ageing skin, then a humidifier can help to reduce water loss and keep your skin looking plumped up and moisturised by balancing out low levels of moisture in the air.

#### 2. Manage skin disorders

Skin conditions such as atopic dermatitis, rosacea and psoriasis can all be made worse by dry, air-conditioned or centrally heated rooms. However, by using a humidifier, moisture is added to the air, and you should see a vast improvement in your skin.

#### 3. Prevent skin infections

Certain bacteria and viruses thrive in both high and low humidity and these can lead to skin infections. A humidifier can help to balance out the humidity levels in a room and prevent microbes from affecting your complexion.

#### 4. Protect the skin from allergens and irritants

Low humidity levels affect the barrier function of the skin, which leaves you susceptible to irritants and allergens in the air. A humidifier can help to increase humidity levels and keep your skin protected from external factors.

### TOP TIPS FOR USING A HUMIDIFIER

- > Use bottled or distilled water as these contain fewer microorganisms and a lower mineral content
- > Clean your humidifier regularly – once every 3-4 days
- > Switch on your humidifier before you start your daily skincare routine

### BEST HUMIDIFIERS 2023

- > Best all-rounder: Aennon Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for winter: Vicks VH845 Warm Mist Humidifier
- > Best budget buy: Pro Breeze Premium 3.5L Ultrasonic Cool Mist Humidifier
- > Best for large rooms: Elechomes Top-Fill Ultrasonic Humidifier.



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*Looking after you.*

# BULLSEYE



ENGLISHMAN MICHAEL SMITH BECOMES DARTS WORLD CHAMPION AFTER PLAYING HIS PART IN THE GREATEST LEG OF DARTS EVER SEEN

They say that to be the best, you have to beat the best, and Michael Smith's elevation to world number one – as he took the 2023 world title in January – certainly made true that statement.

Not only did he see off three-time champion Michael van Gerwen at Alexandra Palace in a memorable final, but he also gave the sport what is being described as the most memorable leg of them all.

It came during the second set, and saw two of the sport's titans begin by scoring treble-20 maximums. The next throws also saw the players hit their respective trebles, setting up each on a legendary nine-dart finish. Van Gerwen went first, knocking off treble 20 twice, before faltering on double 12.

With the crowd barely able to reset, Smith stepped up – taking the more conventional nine-dart finish route of treble 20, treble 19, then nailing the double 12, for arguably the most amazing leg of darts in the competition's 29-year history. Smith seized the momentum, rallying thereafter to take the title 7-4 in sets.

While 'Bully Boy', from St Helens, is excelling in what is a modern, showbiz era of professional darts – with packed arenas, primetime TV billing and a semi-celebrity status for the game's major stars – Smith epitomises something reassuringly old school about the sport. He is a 'larger' man, is adorned with tattoos, and reassuringly doesn't possess any of the media training associated with those in other sports.

For example, having come through his semi-final with Belgian Gabriel Clemens, Smith revealed that he'd spend most mornings during the tournament in bed watching repeats of *Catchphrase* and *Supermarket Sweep*.

What's clear, though, is that when the evening comes around, the only programming on display was three decades of dedication to his craft, where laser-like hand-to-eye coordination has made the 32 year old the best darts player in the world.



SPORT

Photo credit: ANDY RAIN/EPA-EFE/Shutterstock





# 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 20<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> 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 meet 2:30 each Sunday in the Reading Rooms, 73 Billericay High Street 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 here in the Reading Rooms in 1957 as a place to study and worship. Topics to be covered in February and March on Sunday afternoons include:

- Feb 5<sup>th</sup> – Creation versus Evolution - is it really a contest?
- Feb 12<sup>th</sup> – What is an immortal soul? Do I have one or not?
- Feb 19<sup>th</sup> – The importance of the Jews in God's plan
- Feb 26<sup>th</sup> – The gospel in the parables - what can we learn?
- Mar 5<sup>th</sup> – Proof for the existence of God

Visit our website for a full list of times and titles in and around Billericay. Also, there are recorded talks on a wide range of Bible topics to stream or download and Free home self study packs to download.

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# CAR SEAT mistakes

While most parents wouldn't dream of driving around without securing their kids in a car seat, many are inadvertently putting them at risk. Here's how to avoid the four most common car seat mistakes.

### Facing forward too soon

Children have relatively large heads and weak necks which means that, if they are facing forward during a collision, their head can jerk forward suddenly and violently. This can result in spinal injuries. Keep your children in rear-facing car seats until they reach the maximum height and weight limit. This is typically around the age of 15 months or up to 13kg (29 lb).

### Twisted or loose harness straps

As many as one in three children are at risk because they are strapped into their car seats incorrectly. Harness straps should lie flat, not twisted, and they need to be tight enough to hold your child safely in an accident. Pull the harness so that it is nice and snug. If you can pinch any excess fabric, then it is too loose.

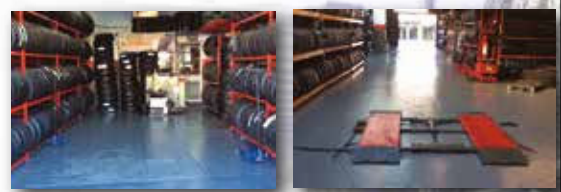
### Too many clothes

Children should not wear coats or other bulky clothes when in a car seat. This is because, if there is a crash, these garments will compress and loosen the harness. Even a hoodie can push your child's head too far forward if the hood is down. Instead, cover your child with a blanket once they are secured if you are concerned about the cold.

### Buying a used car seat

Ideally, you should buy a new car seat, as these are safer than used ones. However, if you do buy a used one, then you need to ensure you do your homework. Choose one that comes with instructions, hasn't been recalled, is no more than six years old, has no visible damage or missing parts, and has never been involved in a crash.

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