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Editor's notes...

MAY 2023



Nik Allen, Editor

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of **VISION** BillericayShenfield. This weekend, we will be witnessing a unique event in most of our lives: the royal ceremony in which a monarch is crowned. The coronation of King Charles III, taking place on Saturday, May 6, will be a momentous occasion that should be celebrated with great pride and enthusiasm by all of us. It marks the first coronation since that of the late Queen in 1953, which was the first time the royal occasion had been televised. Millions of people tuned in to watch the ceremony, and I'm sure the same will be true this year. It is a time to come together as a nation and rejoice in the rich culture and history that make our country unique.

I had a significant event in my life take place at the end of April. I was lucky enough to be invited to 10 Downing Street to a Local Media Champions Reception with the Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport, RT Hon Lucy Frazer KC MP.

I felt honoured to attend and connect with other local media peers throughout the UK. With regional editors across the country invited to the event, it was good to see how far our publications have come to be in such esteemed company.

Nik Allen

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FROM LILY SAVAGE

The death of Paul O'Grady MBE at the end of March brought a premature end to the life of one of our most respected modern-day entertainers – someone whose own reinvention helped the gradual process of changing attitudes in British society.

Growing up on the sometimes rough, often competitive back streets of Liverpool in the Swinging Sixties required more than a little spark and swagger, so it's probably little surprise that one of its finest exports, Paul O'Grady, created a career built on the foundation of his larger-than-life personality.

"As the saying goes, if you can't beat them, join them – and if you can't join them, become a drag act," laughed Paul O'Grady in one of this final interviews.

He departed from us at 67, seemingly with another decade or two of wit, charm and pzazz still ready to be unleashed, and the tributes have been extensive and heartfelt.

O'Grady had a number of jobs growing up, including working as a clerk, a waiter and a barman. It was only when he moved to London that he managed to create a career out of his passion for entertainment and performance.

The star's main outlet was the dynamic and daring Lily Savage, a drag queen act who became hugely popular on the underground scene, and eventually gained mainstream appeal when Channel 4 took up the option to give him a stint on *The Big Breakfast* after Paula Yates' resignation. The likes of *The Lily Savage Show*, *Blankety Blank* (which the character fronted for five years) and *Lily Live!* followed, showcasing the full mainstream evolution of a character. It was a long way from O'Grady's first TV appearance on *The Bill* back in 1988 as a transvestite prostitute informant named Roxanne (credited to Paul Savage).

While Lily Savage was eventually retired, the legacy of such a dynamic figure lived on. The character had opened doors for a brand of leftfield entertainment, and helped carve a path for LGBTQ+ rights and promotion across mainstream entertainment.

"I had been in that world since the seventies when I began performing in pubs and clubs around London, so it was all very natural for me, and had been for decades," he said.

"That I lived in a country that embraced me and loved me for who I was, I found wonderful, and it compelled me to go on to do other things."

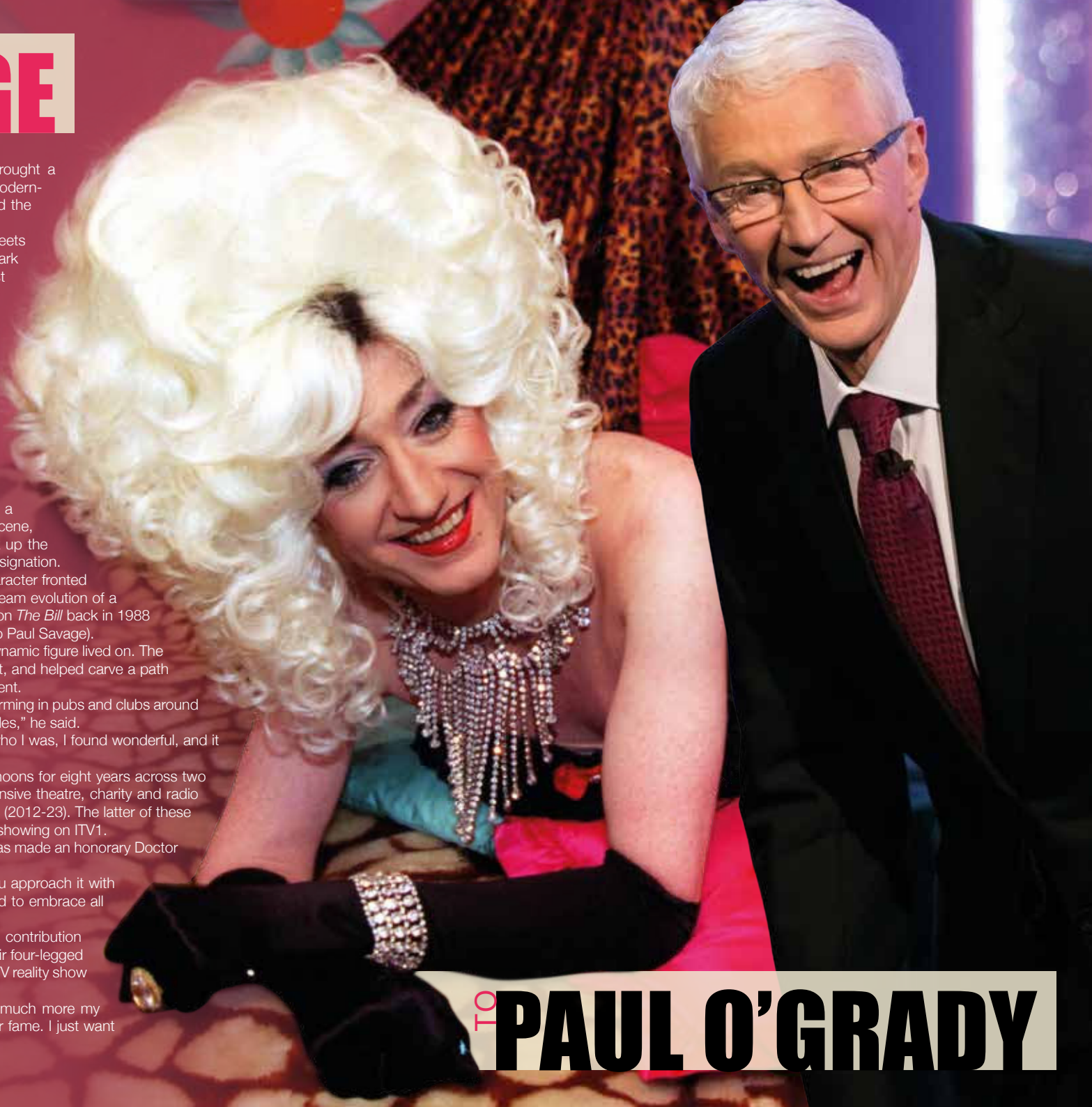
The successful *The Paul O'Grady Show* ran on weekday afternoons for eight years across two spells, and the entertainer also saw huge popularity across extensive theatre, charity and radio work, as well as the likes of *Blind Date* and *For the Love of Dogs* (2012-23). The latter of these popular TV programmes was filmed in late 2022 and is currently showing on ITV1.

In recognition of his contributions to TV, radio and theatre, he was made an honorary Doctor of Arts at De Montfort University Leicester in 2010.

"I always found you can talk about absolutely any subject if you approach it with interest, respect, humility and humour. That's the way I have tried to embrace all the challenges that have come my way," he said.

His funeral, which was held on April 20, featured a significant contribution from Battersea Dogs & Cats Home, who lined the streets with their four-legged residents in honour of the decade O'Grady spent presenting the ITV reality show at Battersea.

"I've always got on better with animals," he joked. "They are much more my type. As I've said before, I am not bothered about sex, money or fame. I just want a mongoose."



TO PAUL O'GRADY

A GUIDE TO THE MOON



Have you ever wondered why the moon appears to change shape each night? These are known as the moon's phases, and it isn't actually the shape of the moon that changes but our view of it.

Find out more about the different phases and names of the moon below.

WHAT ARE THE PHASES OF THE MOON?

- 1. New moon:** You cannot see the moon when it is a new moon.
- 2. Waxing crescent moon:** In the Northern Hemisphere, you see the waxing crescent moon as a thin crescent of light on the right.
- 3. First quarter moon:** The first quarter moon



FULL MOON NAMES

Each monthly full moon has a special name, many of which originated from Native American culture:

- January:** Wolf Moon
- February:** Snow Moon
- March:** Worm Moon
- April:** Pink Moon
- May:** Flower Moon
- June:** Strawberry Moon
- July:** Buck Moon
- August:** Sturgeon Moon
- September:** Full Corn Moon
- October:** Hunter's Moon
- November:** Beaver Moon
- December:** Cold Moon

WHAT IS A BLUE MOON?

A blue moon is an additional full moon that appears every once in a while. Typically, a year contains 12 full moons – three in each season – but sometimes a 13th full moon appears, known as a blue moon. Blue moons usually occur once every two to three years but can occur twice in one year. This is next due to happen in 2037.

WHAT IS A HARVEST MOON?

The harvest moon is the full, bright moon that occurs closest to the start of autumn. The term comes from the days before electricity when farmers relied on the moonlight to harvest their crops at night.

appears as a half moon.

- 4. Waxing gibbous moon:** This phase is between a half moon and full moon. Waxing means it is getting bigger.
- 5. Full moon:** You can see the moon completely illuminated during full moons.
- 6. Waning gibbous moon:** This phase is between a half moon and full moon. Waning means it is getting smaller.
- 7. Last quarter moon:** This appears as a half moon but with the opposite half illuminated to the first quarter moon.
- 8. Waning crescent moon:** In the Northern Hemisphere, you see the waning crescent moon as a thin crescent of light on the left.

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Should you wish to find out more information on our beautiful home or wish to book a tour you can contact our Customer Relationship Manager Sommer Turner on 01277 846900 or alternatively email sommer.turner@hallmarkcarehomes.co.uk who will be able to assist with your enquiry.



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fiddle-leaf fig



PLANT TO YOUR HOME

If you are looking for a new indoor plant for your home, then a fiddle-leaf fig is a great choice. With large, glossy leaves and an impressive trunk, this statuesque tree can act as the focal point in any room.

WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENT TYPES OF FIDDLE-LEAF FIGS?

The most common type of fiddle-leaf fig plant is the *ficus lyrata*, which grows to around 10 feet tall when kept inside. Other varieties include:

- > **Ficus lyrata bambino** – a dwarf variety that grows to only a few feet tall
- > **Ficus lyrata compacta** – features smaller leaves and grows to around five feet tall
- > **Ficus lyrata variegata** – an uncommon variety with a mix of green and cream leaves

HOW TO CARE FOR A FIDDLE-LEAF FIG

A fiddle-leaf fig needs bright, filtered light to grow, as direct sunlight can burn its leaves. Any quality indoor plant potting mix is fine as long as the soil drains well. This plant needs a moderate amount of moisture to thrive; too much can cause root rot and too little can cause the leaves to wilt. During the growing season (spring to autumn), water when the top inch of the soil feels dry, and then slightly less over winter. Also add a fertiliser specially made for this plant during growing season and remember to regularly clean its leaves.

HOW TO PRUNE A FIDDLE-LEAF FIG

To keep your fiddle-leaf fig in optimal condition, cut back any damaged leaves, overgrowth or crossing branches. Make the cuts about an inch away from the trunk to avoid damage.

WHERE TO BUY A FIDDLE-LEAF FIG

You can buy fiddle-leaf fig trees either online or at some garden centres.

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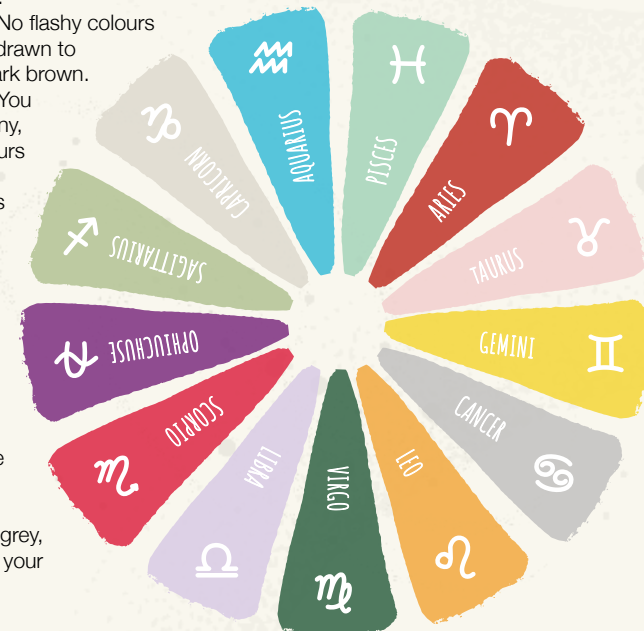
COLOUR PALETTE



HOME & DIY

Did you know that each zodiac sign has its own bespoke colour palette? Based around the concept of colour psychology, here are the best colours for you and your home, plus why you are drawn to them in the first place.

- > **AQUARIUS:** Elevated primary colours... Not one to stick to the rules, you're drawn to colours that stand out. Choose primary colours with a twist, such as turquoise or deep red.
- > **PISCES:** Soft and daydreamy colours... A true romantic, opt for soft hues such as seafoam green and lavender that promise to make you feel open and carefree.
- > **ARIES:** Big and bold colours... Energetic and passionate, you are linked to powerful colours that draw the eye, such as red and deep oranges.
- > **TAURUS:** Playful and bright colours... Light shades of pink and pastel green are perfect for your playful nature.
- > **GEMINI:** Contrasting colours... Geminis are associated with the colour yellow owing to their sunny disposition. Add in some neutral shades for enhanced balance.
- > **CANCER:** Gentle and cool colours... You gravitate towards cooler and lighter tones such as light blue and silver.
- > **LEO:** Striking and statement colours... You command attention, so bold and warm colours such as orange, yellow and gold are ideal for you.
- > **VIRGO:** Grounded and earthy colours... No flashy colours or concepts for Virgos. Instead, you are drawn to earthy tones such as forest green and dark brown.
- > **LIBRA:** Warm and welcoming colours... You have energy that likes to promote harmony, so lavender and pink are both great colours for you.
- > **SCORPIO:** Dark and moody colours... As a sensual and mysterious being, you are inspired by maroon and crimson tones.
- > **OPHIUCHUS:** Deep and mysterious colours... Located between Scorpio and Sagittarius, you are both passionate and unpredictable. Purple should be your go-to colour.
- > **SAGITTARIUS:** Inspiring and intelligent colours... You want a space that makes you feel free, so greens and blues are the colours that draw you in.
- > **CAPRICORN:** Simple and minimalistic colours... Neutral colours such as white, grey, black and ivory are the perfect match for your calm demeanour.





Your guide to SPONGES

A GUIDE TO CHOOSING THE RIGHT SPONGES AND HOW TO KEEP THEM CLEAN

While you may not have given much thought to sponges, if you hate doing the dishes or cleaning kitchen worktops, the right sponge can help to make tiresome tasks a breeze.

WHAT ARE THE MOST COMMON TYPES OF SPONGE?

NON-SCRATCH SPONGES

Sponges that are labelled as non-scratch are safe to use on non-stick pots and pans, as well as real wood surfaces. They also will not scratch the surfaces of ceramic bakeware. Non-scratch sponges are a good choice for cleaning glassware as they effectively remove dirt without causing any damage.

HEAVY-DUTY SPONGES

As the name suggests, heavy-duty sponges are highly abrasive so should be used to remove tough, stuck-on dirt and debris from kitchen items such as stainless steel pans. Heavy-duty sponges are not suitable for non-stick cookware, as they are likely to scratch their Teflon coating, nor for ceramic cookware or copper pans.

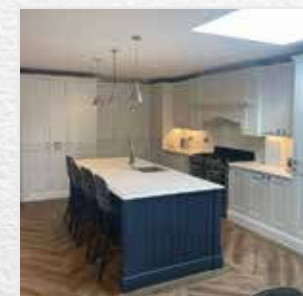
CELLULOSE SPONGES

Cellulose sponges are made from recycled plant fibres, making them a good option for those who want to reduce their carbon footprint and become more sustainable. The main benefits of cellulose sponges are that they are low-cost and very absorbent. However, they are also prone to collecting bits of food over time, so you need to make sure that you

sanitise your sponge weekly and throw it away when it shows signs of wear. Ideal for cleaning kitchens, windows, countertops and bathrooms.

HOW DO I CLEAN REUSABLE SPONGES?

The best way to kill bacteria harbouring in reusable sponges is to clean them in your microwave or dishwasher. If you choose the former, wet the sponge thoroughly and heat on high for one minute. Alternatively, place on the top rack of your dishwasher with the drying cycle on. Do this once a week for best results.



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Who doesn't appreciate a taste of luxury, especially when it comes to home design? One of the most famous names in British luxury interiors is Helen Green Design. Originally

founded by the late Helen Green in 2002, the design house describes itself as "a comprehensive luxury interior design studio synonymous with the creation of beautifully crafted, multi-layered, elegant interiors". And we agree.

Learn more about what makes Helen Green Design one of the best in the business and how you can recreate the look at home.

From stand-out homes in Belgravia to yachts that travel the world, Helen Green Design is behind a wide variety of exquisite home interiors.

Blending both modern and traditional elements, you can expect neutral shades paired with luxury textures to create wonderful designs that are always sure to impress.

How to get the look at home

While Helen Green Design is a design house that oozes sophistication and luxury, it is possible to get the Helen Green look at home. Here are some easy tips to help you make high-end more affordable:

1 Work with the details of your home. From panelling to intricate ceiling patterns, you can keep some of the original features of your home to contrast the modern touches you bring into it.

2 Keep spaces clean and clutter-free to let your statement furniture do the talking. Less is more to create an elegant look.

3 Use textures to add detail. From textured wall art to textured flooring and walls, you can easily add some features to make your interior look and feel more expensive.

Helen Green Design provides the perfect inspiration for any home looking for a high-class upgrade. However, you don't need a luxury budget in order to achieve this look in your own home.



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FROM YOUR AREA

LOCAL NEWS

Dad takes on marathon for children's charity



Photo credit: Chris Philcox Facebook

A dad from Billericay took part in the London Marathon on Sunday, April 23, to raise funds for a children's charity.

Chris Philcox (pictured above) raised more than £2,500 for Rays of Sunshine, a charity that provides support and grants wishes for seriously ill young people.

He said: "Being a father myself, I know that having a seriously ill child is the worst place you could be. I wasn't aware of the charity before a friend of mine highlighted it to me, but after seeing the work it does, it made me want to raise money for it."

Speaking after the marathon, he said: "I managed to beat my time from last year and finished in five hours and 24 minutes. Very achy today."

Chris is also raffling off the chance to design his first tattoo, with all proceeds going to the charity. Tickets cost £2.50 and the winner will have full control over what gets inked on his hip/thigh.

Entry closes at 8pm on May 15 and tickets can be bought at www.raffall.com/335178/enter-raffle-to-win-design-my-first-tattoo-hosted-by-chris-philcox

Football club come out on top in nail-biting final

Shenfield AFC came out on top at the BBC Essex Saturday Premier Cup Final on April 13.

The team went head to head with Waking Sports

Reserves at Billericay Town FC's New Lodge Stadium, and won the game 3-1 after a nail-biting match.

More than 500 people were in attendance to watch the club take home the cup.

Shenfield manager Kevin Williamson said: "I think it was a very good game and both teams played very well. I'm delighted for the boys and it is an honour to manage these players. It's all about those 22-plus players on the pitch and if they enjoy it, I enjoy it."

The club previously played Rayleigh Town Saturday First in the semi-finals, winning the game 2-1.

Two friends launch new podcast series

Two friends from Billericay have set up a new podcast together.

Georgi Pat (pictured below left) and Chanel Smith (pictured below right) have been close friends for three years and recently launched their podcast, *Not to Change the Subject But...*

The pair decided they wanted to discuss the same topics featured on their favourite celebrity podcasts, but from a 'real' point of view.

Chanel said: "We started the podcast just for us and wanted to see how it went. We went into it with no expectations other than something we'd like to do together. We're really surprised at how well it has done. We feel really excited."

"I really enjoy having a catch-up with Georgi. It's like having a diary and it will be great to look back on it in years to come."

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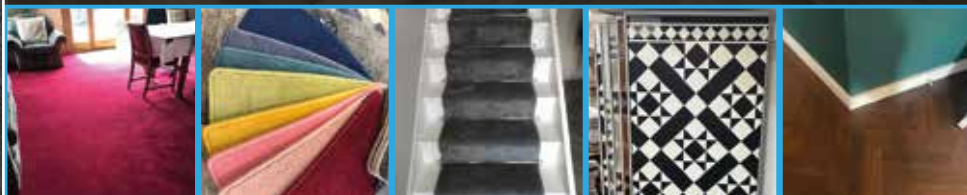
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BURGHART for BRENTWOOD

Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar



LOCAL NEWS



The sun is out, the days are longer and the feeling of spring is in the air. It's a great time to be getting out and about in the fresh air of Brentwood and Ongar – unless you are a member of the select band of students currently revising hard for GCSEs, A Levels, EBaccs, IBaccs and other public exams.

The young people taking exams this year are still suffering the after-effects of two years of disrupted learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. For those who had good access to online learning, the experience strengthened their independent learning skills. For those who struggled to access online learning, either for technical or for other reasons – some students with neurodivergent conditions like autism, ADHD and dyslexia found the discipline and sameness of online learning very hard – it's been a battle to catch up and focus on exam revision.

I recently visited the Brentwood Ursuline Convent High School Sixth Form politics students, many of whom are preparing for the A Levels that will take them on in their education, with places already offered at universities across the country, including Cambridge. The students asked some challenging and knowledgeable questions, and had a clear enthusiasm

for the subject. I wish all those in the depths of revision well with your exams, and hope you get all the results you need to take you further with your future academic or employment plans.

I've been talking to nursery managers recently, who are at the very starting point of children's learning. There's some concern that recruitment is being made harder by the need for staff to have GCSE maths and English, or equivalent, before they can be considered to be fully qualified. This can be a struggle for some, not least those who last took exams when they were still O Levels but cannot find the certificates to prove they passed. I've raised these concerns with the Minister for Children and will continue to discuss the concerns of nursery staff with my Parliamentary colleagues.

That said, as a country we need to improve our numeracy – although we've made considerable gains in the past 10 years, we still have a long way to go. The Prime Minister understands this and is keen to ensure that young people keep learning maths until they leave school at 18. He is quite right that a change in our national approach – a change to the idea that 'it's okay to be bad at maths' – is necessary to create a skilled and competitive workforce for the future.

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WHAT'S ON

YOUR LOCAL EVENTS

SHENFIELD CRICKET CLUB FUN DAY
 22A Chelmsford Road, Shenfield,
 Brentwood, CM15 8RQ
 Sunday, May 7, 12pm – late



Photo credit: Shenfield CC Twitter

Shenfield Cricket Club are raising money for special needs charity SNAP and St Mary's PFA with a free family fun day. Guests can enjoy face painting, bouncy castles and coronation-themed stalls. There will also be food, a bar and live music.

JOEY IBIZA COMEDY NIGHTS
The Stable Room, Red Lion Pub, High Street, Billericay, CM12 9AJ
 Saturday, May 20, doors open at 7pm, show starts at 8pm
 Come along to the *Joey Ibiza Comedy Night*, where a number of well-known comedians will take to the mic. Comedian Ross McGrane will MC and John Oakes, Hazel Donovan, Matt Adlington and Spring Day will be performing sets guaranteed to make you giggle.
 Tickets cost £15 on the door or can be purchased in advance for £12.50 at www.ticketsource.co.uk/whats-on/essex/the-stable-room-red-lion-pub/joey-ibiza-comedy-nights/e-qzybbo

SUNDAY SOIREE, GLORIA ESTEFAN WITH VICKY
Billericay Theatre, 34 Radford Way, Billericay, CM12 0DX
 Sunday, May 21, 4pm
 Singer Vicky Kaylor will celebrate the music of Gloria Estefan with a two-hour performance.
 Vicky said: "I absolutely love performing at Billericay Theatre; it's such a unique, intimate theatre with a great atmosphere."
 Tickets cost £12 from www.tickettailor.com/events/thebillericaytheatre/854177

ELTON JOHN TRIBUTE SHOW
Billericay Theatre, 34 Radford Way, Billericay, CM12 0DX
 Saturday, May 27, 8pm – 11pm
 You can enjoy all of Sir Elton John's classics at Billericay Theatre's tribute night. Singer Forever Elton will perform the Greatest Hits Tour from *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* via *Crocodylle Rock* to *Candle in the Wind*. Food will be available throughout the night.
 To buy a ticket for £24, visit www.tickettailor.com/events/thebillericaytheatre/818113

THORNDON NATURE PRINTING
Thorndon Countryside Centre, Thorndon Park North, The Avenue, Brentwood, CM13 3RZ
 Tuesday, May 30, 1pm – 3pm
 Children and young people aged five to 16 have the chance to print their own floral designs on a canvas tote bag at Essex Wildlife Trust's next event. Participants can also create a seedhead clay coaster at the session, which takes place in the woods.
 Tickets can be bought for £10 from www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/thorndon-nature-printing-5-16-years-tickets-598406117807?aff=ebdssbdestsearch

FUN WITH PIP JONES
Chicken and Frog Bookshop, 30 Crown Street, Brentwood, CM14 4BA
 Tuesday, May 30, 2pm – 3pm
 Chicken and Frog Bookshop is celebrating the release of the children's picture book *Squishy McFluff's Camping Adventure!* Award-winning author Pip Jones will be hosting a meet-and-greet for all ages, which costs £2 per child.
 Tickets can be bought from www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/fun-with-pip-jones-squishy-mcfluff-tickets-598436468587



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Enjoy the delights of the traditional British seaside

For those who crave a bit of nostalgia, and maybe worry that our ability to connect with iconic seaside locations of old is a thing of the past, a trip to Frinton-on-Sea is the perfect remedy.

There is little to rival the natural vibrancy of a sumptuous, sunny, sandy beach, as radiant sun beats down on the coolest, finest Essex sand.

And yet, where Frinton-on-Sea is concerned, serenity and nostalgia come as much from its vibrant rows of beach huts as they do from the wondrous natural environment.

Its architecturally precise promenade sees beach huts painted in a kaleidoscope of bright colours, and these have been an integral part of the town's heritage for more than 100 years. Simple in their form, they retail for upwards of £50,000 – yet if a 12ft square space is adequate for you to relax, change or store beach essentials in, then perhaps the investment is worthwhile? These picturesque huts have become a symbol of traditional British seaside culture and continue to draw visitors from far and wide, yet Frinton is about so much more.

Its unspoiled sandy beaches are award-winning and stretch for miles along the coast, and the gentle slope of the shoreline creates a shallow, safe swimming area that is perfect for families and children. Meanwhile, the absence of amusement arcades, commercial outlets and 'kiss me quick' hats ensures that this part of the Tendring coastline retains a sense of simplicity and class that few other resorts around the UK can rival.

Even the aforementioned promenade, adorned with Victorian-style streetlamps and ornate railings, holds a sense of class about it; while further back, extensive parkland shows the town's custodians are just as adept with grass as they are with sand.

Frinton-on-Sea has a population of fewer than 5,000. Although several times that number swarm into the area on hot summer days, it rarely feels anything other than idyllic. The next time you're looking for an idyllic British seaside escape, Frinton should be top of the list.



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KIDS

Make a

splash



Stuck for something to do with the kids on a typically rainy day in the UK? No need to fret; there will be smiles all round if you pay a visit to one of these top indoor waterparks.

Waterworld, Stoke-on-Trent

Frequently listed as one of the top indoor waterparks in the UK, Waterworld is a fantastic day out for all the family. Featuring 30 rides and activities for all ages, some of its most popular attractions include slides for toddlers, white-knuckle rapids and a wave pool.

Splashdown, Dorset

Splashdown offers 13 thrilling indoor and outdoor rides, as well as three splash zones for children under five. Our favourite ride by far is the Mississippi Drifter, where the whole family can ride on one inflatable tyre. The Infinity flume is also great fun, and you can even pick your own music!

Sandcastle Waterpark, Blackpool

The largest indoor waterpark in the UK, Sandcastle features an impressive 18 rides and attractions for you to enjoy. As well as the slides, wave pools and flumes, this waterpark has arcades, snack bars and cafés, so you can easily spend the whole day there.

Alton Towers Waterpark, Staffordshire

If you want to combine theme park rides with water slides, the Alton Towers Waterpark is the ideal choice for you and your family. With high-speed slides, waterfalls, tranquil lagoons and relaxing hot tubs, there's something for everyone at this popular waterpark.



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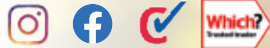




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DOES YOUR DOG HAVE HAY FEVER?



PETS

Did you know that dogs can suffer with hay fever? In fact, an estimated 10 per cent of pooches in the UK suffer with this seasonal affliction.

DOES MY DOG HAVE HAY FEVER?

Unlike in humans, who typically experience itchy eyes, sneezing and a runny nose, hay fever in dogs typically manifests itself on their skin. Look out for your dog itching, nibbling or rubbing any of the following spots:

Paws | Eyes, ears and mouth | Armpits | Abdomen | Legs | Around their bottom | Groin

In some cases, their skin may also look red, flaky and sore, or they may experience fur loss as a result of constant scratching.

WHEN IS HAY FEVER SEASON?

When your dog suffers with hay fever will be dependent on where you live in the UK and what strain of pollen your dog is sensitive to. However, that being said:

- > Tree pollen occurs from late March to mid-May
- > Grass pollen occurs from mid-May to July
- > Weed pollen occurs from the end of June to September

HOW TO TREAT HAY FEVER IN DOGS

Although hay fever cannot be treated, there are things that you can do to help manage their symptoms and make your dog feel more comfortable. Some of the available hay fever

treatments for dogs are:

- > Topical treatments, such as medicated shampoos and creams
- > Antihistamines (prescribed by your vet)
- > Essential fatty acid supplements
- > Medication to reduce your dog's immune reaction, such as steroids
- > Immunotherapy – although this is expensive and not always effective

HOW TO MANAGE HAY FEVER IN DOGS

- > Walk your dog early in the morning or later in the evening to avoid high pollen counts
- > Keep your dog's ears clean to prevent irritation
- > Wipe your dog's fur, skin and paws with a damp cloth after a walk
- > Wash their bedding regularly
- > Vacuum your home regularly
- > Use an air filter system in your home
- > Stay up to date with your dog's flea and worming treatments

CAN CATS GET HAY FEVER?

Yes, cats can also get hay fever and tend to experience many of the same symptoms as dogs, such as excessive itching, most commonly on the ears, bottom and paws. Cats

may also snore as a result of an inflamed throat.

You can get topical creams and anti-itch wipes to alleviate their symptoms.



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PUZZLES & TRIVIA

PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

- ▶ ACCRA
- ▶ ADDIS ABABA
- ▶ ALGIERS
- ▶ CAIRO
- ▶ DAKAR
- ▶ FREETOWN
- ▶ GABORONE
- ▶ HARARE
- ▶ KAMPALA
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- ▶ VICTORIA
- ▶ WINDHOEK

U	R	U	A	N	A	S	A	H	S	N	I	K	V	F
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I	Z	R	B	R	W	A	A	E	R	M	J	I	C	U
D	F	E	A	T	I	P	M	K	I	O	P	I	A	O
A	E	E	B	O	N	N	W	E	C	G	T	A	M	C
G	R	T	A	T	D	I	U	N	Y	H	L	C	L	B
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M	R	W	I	P	O	R	Z	R	U	U	I	T	W	V
H	A	N	D	A	E	T	O	O	F	D	S	R	T	N
W	H	B	D	M	K	Y	I	B	L	U	S	A	K	A
R	A	K	A	D	T	P	H	A	E	A	R	C	C	A
D	I	B	O	R	I	A	N	G	L	P	W	Q	F	V
M	S	S	E	M	O	N	R	O	V	I	A	T	V	L
R	A	R	T	P	A	E	W	G	N	O	L	I	L	Y

DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Members of the Royal Family are not allowed to sign autographs. This is in case somebody tries to forge their signature.
- ▶ During her reign, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II sent more than 300,000 congratulatory cards to people celebrating their 100th birthdays, and more than 900,000 messages to couples marking their diamond (60th) wedding anniversary.
- ▶ King Charles III, the former Prince of Wales, has been the heir apparent since he was three years old.
- ▶ In November 1965, while a student at Gordonstoun School, the then-Prince of Wales played the lead in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*.
- ▶ The former Prince of Wales has presented the weather forecast on the BBC.

WORD LADDER

ROAD
TYRE

THE AIM: Change the word at the top of the ladder one letter at a time to make the word at the bottom.

HOW TO: Change one letter on each step to make a new word. By the time you reach the end, you should have created the new word.

DO NOT rearrange the order of the letters.

TIP: There is usually more than one way to solve this puzzle.

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LEWIS CAPALDI

A black and white photograph of Lewis Capaldi performing on stage. He is wearing a dark long-sleeved shirt and dark trousers. He is holding an acoustic guitar and a microphone on a stand. He has a joyful expression, looking upwards and to the right. The background is dark and out of focus.

Someone We Love...

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For the vast majority of us, this is a relief. Not only does it lend hope that any of us can aspire to and reach the most ambitious of heights; more importantly, it dispels the faux perfection that emanates from TV screens, devices and digital radios.

"I grew up in that era where everyone looked like they had just stepped off a catwalk," begins Capaldi, the 26-year-old Scottish singer-songwriter who has captivated the hearts of many with his soulful voice and emotive lyrics.

"We don't have to play those games anymore and I think there is much more allowance for us to be ourselves. It's real progress."

The star, who rose to fame with his chart-topping single *Someone You Loved* in 2019 – a track currently ascending past a colossal three billion streams on Spotify – is reaping the rewards of two decades of soul-searching and hard work... a process that came to light via a recent Netflix documentary, *How I'm Feeling Now*.

The production shone a light on the perseverance that has patterned his rise to the top, as well as giving the artist the opportunity to open up about living with Tourette's syndrome.

The neurological disorder is characterised by involuntary movements and vocalisations, known as tics. "It's something that has always been with me and perhaps always will, but it's so important I use my platform to reassure other people that

Tourette's doesn't need to hold you back from what it is you want to do," he says.

"For years, I felt imprisoned by it, before realising I could use it as a stimulus, because sometimes you need something to rally against in your life, and Tourette's is that thing for me."

Perhaps we shouldn't be surprised at Capaldi's ability to counter life's challenges. A deep thinker, the Scot's emotional attentiveness frequently comes across in his music. From the breakthrough *Someone You Loved*, a poignant ballad, characterised by its raw lyrics and melancholic piano melody, that spent seven weeks at the top of the UK singles chart and reached number one in the US too, to the soulful vocals and introspective lyrics of *Bruises*.

In 2022, both *Forget Me* and *Pointless* made it to the top of the hit parade as well. The former track was Capaldi's first meaningful release in three years, and despite huge previous success, his candid uncertainty was on show in the promotion of the track, when he revealed, "It could be the beginning of a beautiful chapter in my life, or the very public downward spiral that, let's face it, I'm probably due."

Of course, the artist needn't have worried, and he is now embarking on a UK tour to accompany the release of his album, *Broken by Desire to Be Heavenly Sent*, on May 19.

Capaldi is a singer-songwriter of impeccable talent but, almost as important, devastating humility... and he's here to stay.



GOT SOME FRONT

Our front gardens are typically a bit more restrictive than the spaces behind our homes, but that doesn't mean we can't still make them look stunning.

They are the outdoor spaces that typically lack privacy, are exposed to dirtier air, and may even find themselves hosting a car or work vehicle. Therefore, for the added aggro our front gardens have to put up with, it's sensible to keep things simple, saving your energy for the private space at the back.

Beginning with plants and varieties of flowers, it's sensible to limit a front garden to perhaps just five or six variations. If you include too many different styles, it can create a hotchpotch of ideas that will only make your home look untidy.

Also try to prioritise privacy over prettiness. The front of our property is exposed to all and sundry, so carefully positioned hedges, shrubs and trees can keep unwanted eyes away. Just be sure not to

position larger living matter in front of windows to prevent blocking out the light.

When selecting plants, consider varieties that will last all year round, saving you a constant summer/winter change-up. Think summer roses that progress into gorgeous winter blossoms, and evergreens that will grace the changing seasons with constant class.

As far as a lawn goes, while artificial grass has never been better or looked more authentic, a small area of real grass, or perhaps one either side of a path, is low maintenance and can be taken care of with a simple mower. While it's tempting to bring a wild meadow into the equation, that look is always better achieved in a larger garden, where a rugged area is established in a well-tended garden.

Finally, if you're looking to pave or lay down slate or stone in a front garden, remember weeds will still work their way through, so keep an eye on things, particularly in the summer months.

keeping your front garden low maintenance



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TO DIG OR NOT TO DIG?



GARDENING

Although it may seem strange, no-dig gardening is becoming increasingly popular owing to its ability to save time, banish weeds and ensure plants grow more healthily.

WHAT IS NO-DIG GARDENING?

No-dig gardening is a method of cultivation that aims for minimal disturbance of the soil. Made popular by Charles Dowding, an author and avid gardener, no-dig gardening requires less fertiliser and pesticide, is suitable for any size garden, and can be used to grow flowers, shrubs or vegetables.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

No-dig gardening is beneficial to your soil, garden and the environment, and can significantly reduce the need to weed. Soil stores a lot of carbon, which means that the more you dig, the more is released into the atmosphere. There is also evidence to suggest that digging upsets the structure of the soil.

A GUIDE TO NO-DIG GARDENING

STEP 1: PREPARE THE AREA

Remove any large weeds and then cover the ground in a layer of light blocking material such as torn-up newspaper. If creating a no-dig area on grass, add a layer of manure and lime first.

STEP 2: ADD LAYERS

Add a layer of kitchen scraps, such as vegetable peelings or fruit waste, and a layer of compost made from leaves and grass cuttings. Then, add a layer of straw, another layer of compost, and finally another layer of straw.

STEP 3: MAKE WELLS FOR PLANTING

Create wells about 10cm deep in the top layer of straw and fill them with compost. Then, plant your seeds or seedlings into the wells. Water well and wait for your no-dig garden to grow.

Photo credit: charlesdowding.co.uk



HISTORY



The PEOPLE'S PALACE

Imagine living amid the smog, chaos and stench of Victorian London. Now imagine the bliss of fresh air and some live entertainment to take your mind off things. Alexandra Palace, which opened 150 years ago this month, was built to give Londoners that chance to escape the daily grind.

The palace opened on Queen Victoria's 54th birthday with a grand celebration. Tragically, fire destroyed the building just a fortnight after it opened. But two years later, it opened again – and this time it was bigger and better. There was a concert hall, theatre, circus, racetrack, boating lake, the Victorian equivalent of a food court, and even a Japanese-style garden.

Sadly, the privately owned palace and surrounding parkland struggled to make money. In 1900, the site was bought by the nation, and an Act of Parliament

decreed that it should remain “a place of public resort and recreation”.

During the First World War, the palace was home to refugees and later became an internment camp for ‘enemy aliens’. It became a refugee shelter again during the Second World War, and also a staging post for troops on their way back from Dunkirk.

But perhaps the palace is best known for its link to BBC television. The corporation launched the world's first television service from studios built in the palace's former dining rooms in 1936.

To this day, the palace continues to host leading events, including theatre performances, retail shows, gigs, fairs and festivals to honour its commitment to serve the public.

To find out what's on this summer, check out alexandrapalace.com/whats-on

Alexandra Palace was built as a north London version of Crystal Palace, which hosted The Great Exhibition in 1851. It was named after the Danish-born Princess Alexandra, who had just married Queen Victoria's eldest son – later to become Edward VII. It was called The People's Palace and soon became widely known as Ally Pally.



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SPORT

UNUSUAL SPORT:

Underwater Rugby

HEARING THE RALLYING CRY OF 'SWIM LOW, SWEET CHARIOT', IT CAN ONLY BE AN INVITATION TO PLAY UNDERWATER RUGBY

In 1961 in Cologne, Germany, a new variation on a hybrid sport containing elements of rugby and water polo was invented.

Named underwater rugby, for perhaps rather obvious reasons, the first championships took place some 17 years later, even though the sport's overseers were still unclear as to what the rules should be.

Ultimately, it was decided that there should be six players per side in the pool at any one time, with further substitutes from a total squad of 15 able to be made during the two 15-minute halves.

Most team formations comprise of two forwards, two backs and two goalkeepers or left-wingers, with the aim being to keep possession and score after outwitting the opposition through speed, skill and holding your breath.

The underwater rugby ball is plastic and filled with salt

water and the players have to score in steel goals which are located at the bottom of opposing ends of the pool. The pool dimensions have to be between 12m and 22m in length, 8m and 12m wide, and with a depth of 3.5-5m.

No kicking, hitting or strangling is allowed, but it's a contact sport so, within reason, anything else goes. Officials are present to judge possible offences, resulting in punishments such as warnings, free throws or two-minute penalties.

There were 18 countries involved at the last World Championships in 2019, where Colombia became the first non-Nordic nation to win a gold medal, beating two-time and defending champions Norway in the final in Graz, Austria.

Underwater rugby is said to be the only true 3D sport in the world in the way both the ball and the players can travel in three dimensions and in all directions – imagine, for instance, having a teammate 5m below you in a pool. For this reason, its popularity is exploding.



Photo credit: Ardan Ffiesmann/Shutterstock.com

KIWILICIOUS!

Although small, kiwis pack a punch when it comes to both health benefits and flavour. They're sweet, easy to eat and highly nutritious, so explore this extremely underrated and underused fruit in more detail below.

WHAT IS A KIWI?

If you are unfamiliar with this fruit, then let us tell you a little more about it. Oval in shape and about the size of a large egg, kiwis boast brown skin, green flesh and tiny black seeds.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF EATING KIWIS?

Excellent source of protective antioxidants | Support heart health | Contain both soluble and insoluble fibre for digestive health | Good source of vitamin C | Alleviate some of the symptoms of asthma | Support immune function | Low in calories | Count as one of your five-a-day

HOW TO ENJOY KIWIS:

KIWI FRUIT SMOOTHIE

You will need: 3 peeled kiwis | 1 peeled, stoned and chopped mango | 500ml pineapple juice | 1 sliced banana

Place all the ingredients into a blender and blitz until smooth. Serve over ice.

KIWI AND AVOCADO SALSA

You will need: 3 ripe chopped kiwis | ½ peeled and chopped avocado | ¼ cup of pomegranate seeds | 1 tbsp thinly sliced onion | 1 tsp chopped chilli peppers | 1 tsp extra virgin olive oil | 1 tbsp chopped fresh coriander | Salt and pepper to taste

Place the kiwi, pomegranate seeds, avocado, onion and olive oil in a bowl. Add the chilli peppers and coriander and gently fold in, then season to taste.

KIWI AND STRAWBERRY LIME FRUIT SALAD

You will need: Handful of strawberries | 1 kiwi | 1 tbsp honey | 1 tbsp lime juice | ¼ cup of mint leaves

Chop the strawberries into small cubes and add to a mixing bowl. Peel the kiwis, chop into small cubes and add to the bowl. Add the honey, chopped mint and lime juice and gently mix together. Be careful not to bruise or mash the fruit.



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The German Kitchen

RAVISHING Rhubarb



FOOD & DRINK

An unusual vegetable owing to its very sour yet slightly sweet taste, rhubarb is instantly recognisable by its deep pink hue. Super simple to grow, rhubarb is popular for both sweet and savoury dishes.

Serve as it is or strain the liquid through a muslin-lined sieve first.

2 RHUBARB CHUTNEY

YOU WILL NEED: 250ml cider vinegar | 100g golden caster sugar | 300g chopped rhubarb | 4 chopped medjool dates | 1 tsp grated ginger | 1 cardamom pod

HOW TO MAKE: In a pan, heat the cider vinegar and caster sugar until dissolved | Add the chopped rhubarb, ginger, dates and cardamom pod and cook for 15-20 minutes | Once you have a thick chutney consistency, season with salt to taste | Store in sterilised jars for up to two years (unopened).

What are the healthy benefits of rhubarb?

- > Contains high levels of fibre, which is linked to lower cholesterol levels
- > A good source of vitamin K, which is beneficial for your bone and heart health
- > Full of antioxidants that protect the body from free radicals
- > May help with digestion and to treat digestive disorders

Rhubarb recipes

1 RHUBARB GIN

YOU WILL NEED: 1kg pink rhubarb stalks | 400g white caster sugar | 800ml gin

HOW TO MAKE: Wash the rhubarb, trim the stalks and discard the base and leaves | Cut the stalks into 3cm lengths and place in a sterilised jar with the sugar. (To sterilise jars, wash in soapy water, rinse and then dry in the oven for 20 minutes at a temperature of 140°C/120°C fan/gas mark 1) | Shake and leave overnight | After 24 hours, add the gin, seal and shake again | Leave for four weeks before drinking |





Honey

NOT JUST FOR SPREADING
ON TOAST



On May 20, it's World Bee Day – a time to celebrate those buzzing bugs that make honey.

How do bees make honey?

Using their hollow tongues, bees suck up the nectar from flowers and store it in part of their stomach. Back in the hive, they regurgitate the mixture and spread it through the honeycomb cells. They then fan it with their wings to evaporate the moisture and turn it into honey. There are more than 300 different kinds of honey, depending on the flowers the nectar comes from.

Of course, honey is delicious spread on toast. But did you know it's also a great natural health and beauty aid because it contains micronutrients, including vitamins, minerals and antioxidants? It also has moisturising, antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties. For maximum benefits, choose raw, organic honey.

Healthy scalp and hair

To treat your scalp, use a tablespoon or two of honey straight from the jar. Leave for a couple of hours before rinsing and shampooing. For a hair mask, mix a tablespoon of honey with the same quantity of olive oil. Leave on for 15 minutes before rinsing and shampooing.

Minor cuts, grazes and insect bites

If you're unlucky enough to suffer a cut or bite, simply dab on some honey to help with the healing process.

Sore throats

To relieve a sore throat, mix a tablespoon of honey with ¼ teaspoon turmeric in a mug of warm water or tea, and sip when you need it. You can also use the mixture as a gargle.

Healthy sleep

A tablespoon or two of honey before bed, eaten or in a drink, can help regulate your blood sugar and make you feel relaxed.

Remember...

Never give honey to children under one year as certain bacteria in honey can produce toxins in a baby's intestines. Also remember that honey is high in sugar and calories. The information here is for guidance only – it is not medical advice.



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HEALTH & FITNESS

10 things YOUR GP wishes you knew

Do you often find yourself Googling questions or symptoms you wish you could discuss with your doctor? Read on to discover 10 things your GP wishes you knew, and save yourself time and worry.

remedies that you can use to treat them.

♥ **You do not need to clean your ears**

Earwax is needed to protect your ears and should not be removed with a cotton bud or any other small item. This may cause a perforated ear drum.

♥ **You do not have to have a period on the pill**

You don't need to have a break from the pill so that you have a period. Taking 21-day contraceptive pills back to back without having the seven-day break will not cause any ill effects.

♥ **You don't need to bring down a child's fever**

A fever shows that your body is fighting an infection so, if your child seems well in themselves, you do not need to bring down a high temperature. However, seek medical attention if it is 39.4°C or higher.

♥ **Verrucas do not need to be treated**

In most cases, a verruca will go away on its own in a few weeks or a month without the need for treatment. However, there are over-the-counter

♥ **You do not need to drink eight glasses of water per day**

As long as you stay hydrated, aiming to drink eight glasses of water a day isn't a necessity.

♥ **Watching TV in the dark isn't bad for your eyes**

As long as you take regular breaks from watching TV or any other screen, watching TV with the light off is no worse than watching it with the light on.

♥ **You can drink alcohol on some antibiotics**

Most antibiotics do not interact with alcohol, so you can safely enjoy a drink if you feel well enough. However, you should always check the attached leaflet to be on the safe side.

♥ **Being cold will not give you a cold**

A cold is a virus and is not caused by cold temperatures or being outside.

♥ **Cracking joints doesn't cause arthritis**

Cracking of the joints is caused by bubbles of gas and is nothing to be worried about.

♥ **The five-second rule isn't real**

If your child eats food that has been dropped on the floor, this is highly unlikely to cause any problems.



Europe's best SECOND CITIES

FIVE EUROPEAN COUNTRIES WHERE THE LESSER-KNOWN SECOND CITIES OFFER, ARGUABLY, MORE THAN THE CAPITAL

1. BERGEN, NORWAY

Many people visiting Scandinavia will instantly migrate towards Oslo for its green spaces, architecture and nightlife, yet for those looking to sample a more stylish, artistic side of Norwegian culture, Bergen is the choice. A seductive port decorated with colourful houses and romantic cobbled streets, it is the gateway to the fjords.

2. KRAKÓW, POLAND

Poland's elevation into a popular location to visit over the past 20 years has been impressive, and this is no better exemplified than in the way Kraków, its second city, welcomes visitors.

A former European Capital of Culture, it is a creative tourist's dream, with arts, crafts, collections and museums, plus a host of theatres for the performing arts.

3. PORTO, PORTUGAL

Located on the Iberian Peninsula, many parts of Porto were built with the aim of luring in foreign investment, so it makes sense that Lisbon's smaller sibling has an abundance of interest and charm.

From bridges to cathedrals, elegant gardens to wine tasting – the city is the birthplace of port wine – it's a smorgasbord of tastes and flavours.

4. CORK, IRELAND

The last port of call for the Titanic before it headed off across the Atlantic, Cork has a lot going for it, with a bustling market, friendly people, and a renowned food and drink scene.

Much more personal than Dublin, it introduces tourists to the rural delights of southern Ireland.

5. KOŠICE, SLOVAKIA

A modern city with an eco edge, Košice combines incredible architecture dating back centuries with a defined approach towards sustainability and the repurposing of old spaces for creative industry.

With a warm welcome and thriving arts scene, this is an inspirational place which transports visitors into a world that reflects the past while embracing the future.



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She may only recently have become a recognised TV star, but Esme Young has had a career most budding fashionistas can only dream of.

On first impressions, fashion designers Esme Young and Patrick Grant make unlikely candidates for a sparkling television duo, but that is precisely what they have become as judges on *The Great British Sewing Bee*.

Both have decades of experience in the fashion industry, yet it is Young's effervescent wit and charm that has made her a media darling in her twilight years. She is a natural in front of the camera, but given the Bedfordshire native's illustrious life and career – as revealed in her memoir *Behind the Seams: My Life in Creativity, Friendship and Adventure* – this is hardly surprising.

After graduating from Central Saint Martins in the early 1970s, Young and three of her female friends launched the Camden-based fashion collective Swanky Modes, whose designs appeared in *Vogue*

and were snapped by the likes of David Bailey and Helmut Newton. During these carefree years, Young lived in a squat in Maida Vale, partied with the likes of David Bowie and the Sex Pistols, and saw Swanky Mode dresses worn by superstars of the era such as Grace Jones and Cher.

In the 1990s, Young moved into cinema. Her creations included Leonardo DiCaprio's shirt in *The Beach* and Renée Zellweger's iconic bunny outfit in *Bridget Jones's Diary*.

Alongside her judging role, Young teaches at Central Saint Martins, where she passes down her sartorial wisdom. Musing on how she was taught darning, mending and crocheting by nuns at the all-girl convent school she attended, the talented designer confesses that while seeking perfection in the seams and sleeves she judges, she also wants to be excited and surprised by contestants' creativity.

It seems that, even at 74, Esme Young's best days remain ahead of her.

Photo credit: BBC-Love Productions-James Slack

Greenwoods HOTEL AND SPA

A VENUE FOR ALL SEASONS



Each wedding is bespoke but there are a selection of wedding packages to build on to help you create your ideal day whether it be an intimate civil service and wedding breakfast inside the elegant Manor house or to sit up to 200 in the stunning Garden suite with its terrace and views over the grounds. The wedding team will work with you and your ideas so every wedding is unique.

And if you're planning to get married this year Greenwoods Hotel & Spa has a late availability package that can give your plans an instant upgrade!

The price of £8,995.00 is based on a minimum of 60 guests and includes a drinks reception, three course wedding breakfast with tea and coffee, half a bottle of house wine per guest and glass of bubbles for toasting, plus the resident DJ. The late

availability price also includes sausage and bacon bap evening buffet served with wedges and the fabulous bridal suite complimentary for the special couple that evening.

This spring also sees the opening of the long-awaited Greenwoods Aesthetics, located in the Spa, the fully qualified aesthetics team offer a range of cosmetic surgery 'tweakments' including dermal filler treatments as well as popular vitamin B shots and results-driven microdermabrasion facials. The Spa is now also one of handful of exclusive venues offering Medik8 facials and retails products in Essex.

To find out more about the late availability Wedding package and to book a show round, call the weddings team on 01277 829990.

Discover more about Greenwoods Aesthetics and events coming up this summer, visit greenwoodshotel.com



Looking for the most romantic place to get married? Then take a fresh look at Greenwoods Hotel & Spa in the pretty village of Stock. With a breath-taking blend of 17th century architecture in a beautiful English garden setting it makes the perfect back drop for your special day, summer or winter!

The multi-award winning venue has a real reputation for style and outstanding service with over 15 years' experience in delivering weddings and functions including fabulous food and entertainment which means you're in the safest hands and with its exclusive wedding commitment a Greenwoods' bride will never feel second best!



Weddings at Greenwoods Hotel and Spa

LATE AVAILABILITY 2023 PACKAGE

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£8,995.00

Price based on a minimum of 60 day guests and 100 evening guests.
Any remaining date in 2023



A guide to make-up

EXPIRATION DATES

Be honest, how often do you check the expiration date on your make-up? If the answer is hardly ever, then you're not alone. Unfortunately, out-of-date make-up can cause a whole host of problems, including skin irritations and eye infections.

FOUNDATION: Shelf life of six months to one year
You can keep your foundation germ-free for longer by keeping your fingers away from the neck of the bottle and gently dripping the formula onto the back of your hand before applying. If your foundation starts to separate, it definitely needs to be binned.

CONCEALER: Shelf life of six months to one year
Similar to foundation, concealer can last up to one year as long as you keep it out of direct sunlight and avoid touching the applicator with your fingers. Again, if it separates, throw it away.

LIPSTICK: Shelf life of one year
Typically, a lipstick should last for around 12 months. However, if you notice a change in texture, whether it has started to dry out or become gloopy, or if it starts to smell funny, it is no longer usable. Remember to store your lipstick in a cool, dry place.



EYE PENCIL: Shelf life of one year
Pencils tend to last longer than other eye products as they are sharpened regularly. Keep away from steam for enhanced longevity.

MASCARA: Shelf life of three months
If you don't want to get a nasty eye infection, you should be replacing your mascara once every three months or sooner if you notice that the formula has started to become clumpy or smell strange. Never share mascara.

EYESHADOW: Shelf life of three to six months
Although powder eyeshadow can potentially last for up to two years, because it is used around the eyes, you should replace it more often.

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Many parents who are splitting up find it difficult to focus on their children's needs because of ongoing difficulties in their relationship with one another. Feelings and reactions to separation make it difficult to communicate about their children because they are under stress.

With no clear way of resolving this conflict, parents often end up going to Court. Court proceedings can make the conflict worse by making the parents take sides. New government initiatives are being introduced in a move away from this and to support the early resolution of family law matters.



One of those initiatives is the Planning Together for Children course. It replaces the SPIP (Separated Parents Information Programme) which was introduced in 2006. The Planning Together for Children course puts the emphasis on working together rather than separation.

The course is free of charge but parents can only attend if there is a court application. The course will not be suitable for all parents so Cafcass or the Court will need to make a referral. This can be before the first court hearing, at the first hearing or at any later stage in the court case.

There are three stages to the course:

- Self-directed e-learning on topics such as what happens if parents go to court, understanding and managing emotion, how separation affects children, and looking at things from a child's point of view.
- A workshop with other parents for more learning and discussion. These workshops are usually delivered online but can be in person if needed. They cover topics such as understanding the impact of conflict on children, how separation affects children, and communicating in positive ways with each other.
- an interactive online parenting plan. The plan encourages agreement over sharing the care and support of children. Parents are encouraged to share the plan in a way that is understandable to the children.

It encourages parents to think about their children first while working out how they can parent together when separating or living apart. It is aimed at protecting children against some of the harmful effects of parental conflict.

Sally Ward's comment

By the time disputes over children get to court parents are often very entrenched, their emotions spiral out of control and their children's best interests get forgotten. Being able to refer parents to the Planning Together for Children course right at the beginning of a court application should encourage parents to focus on their children and avoid court hearings which will keep their costs down.



Family disputes and conflicts can be a difficult and emotionally charged time. You will receive expert, cost-effective guidance which delivers the best possible solution to the issues in your case, if you work with us.

With over 75 years of cumulative experience we can offer support and advice on all legal aspects of relationship breakdown.

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- Parental Responsibility Agreements
- Pensions On Divorce
- Divorce
- Prenuptial Agreements
- Separation Agreements

If your case is suitable we can offer a 40-minute free consultation with one of the team.



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ISAs VS...

If you want to start saving, then you may be wondering where to put your hard-earned cash. Two of the most popular options are ISAs and savings accounts, but which one is best for you?

WHAT IS AN ISA?

ISA stands for individual savings account and offers a tax-efficient way to save money. There are four types of ISAs:

- Cash ISAs
- Stocks and shares ISAs
- Innovative finance ISAs
- Lifetime ISAs

The government sets a limit for how much can

be saved each financial year and does not charge any tax on the interest you earn.

WHAT IS A SAVINGS ACCOUNT?

A savings account offers a safe place to put aside your money and allows you to earn varying amounts of interest. Depending on your circumstances, you may have to pay tax on any interest earned.

There are several different types of savings accounts, including:

- Easy-access accounts
- Fixed-term accounts
- Regular savings accounts

ISA	Savings Account
Completely tax-free	Interest is taxed if you earn over £1,000 for basic tax earners and £500 for high tax earners per year
You can deposit up to £20,000 per year	No limits on deposits
Limited to opening one type of ISA per year	No limits on how many accounts you can open
Good for large amounts and long-term saving	Good for large amounts and long-term saving

SHOULD I OPEN AN ISA OR A SAVINGS ACCOUNT?

Before you decide whether to open an ISA or a savings account, you need to determine your needs and savings goals. Typically, you can earn more competitive interest rates on a savings account and, depending on the account, you may be able to both deposit and withdraw money. However, an ISA is a good choice if you want to protect yourself from paying tax on any interest earned.



...SAVINGS ACCOUNTS

INVESTOR CONFIDENCE RETURNS

A recent survey¹ suggests investors are becoming more confident despite ongoing challenges on the economic front. While this is certainly encouraging, maintaining a long-term outlook and retaining a strong sense of discipline in investment positioning remains a prerequisite for any successful investor.

AN AIR OF OPTIMISM

It's fair to say 2022 was a turbulent year for global markets with the war in Ukraine, soaring inflation and rising interest rates weighing heavily on a difficult 12-month period. Towards the end of the year, however, markets did stage a cautious recovery despite ongoing fears of a looming recession.

INFLATION EXPECTED TO FALL

The final quarter of last year also witnessed a rebound in investor sentiment, with the same survey reporting a seven per cent point rise in confidence in the global economy, although this was before the recent woes in the banking sector. This optimism was driven by hopes that inflation has now peaked and is set to continue falling in the months ahead; a view reflected in the International Monetary Fund's latest economic musings², which predict global inflation will drop from 8.8 per cent in 2022 to 6.6 per cent this year and 4.3 per cent in 2024.

YOUNG GUNS

Data from the survey also revealed a majority of investors were either positive or ambivalent about last year's market volatility and its impact on their investing mindset. This was particularly true for younger investors, with three-quarters of 18 to 34 year olds either positive or indifferent compared to six in 10 over-55s. This variation will partly reflect differing retirement time horizons, with younger investors more able to adopt a longer-term view.

INVESTOR DISCIPLINE IS KEY

This is clearly encouraging. Maintaining a long-term philosophy based on prudent risk management principles and avoiding panicked decisions has always been a key element for successful investing and maintaining discipline in investment positioning. In practice, this means achieving an appropriate level of diversification and understanding how to blend investments – that's what we do.

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.

¹ eToro, 2023; ² IMF, 2023

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GUIDE TO BUYING A

USED SCOOTER

Whether you are a first-time buyer or are seasoned in the world of scooters, a used one can save you a pretty penny.

Below are four questions you need to ask before buying a used scooter.

1 DOES IT RUN?

While this may seem like a no-brainer, before you buy a used scooter, you need to make sure that it actually runs. Once you have established that it does, the next step is to listen to how it sounds. Four-stroke engines should have a smooth hum, whereas two-stroke engines should sound like a gentle chainsaw, so make sure you listen out when you do a test drive.

2 HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN SITTING?

If you are purchasing a used scooter online, take a close look at the pictures. Does the scooter look

dusty or rusted? If yes, then it may have been sitting unused for a while. Make sure you check the battery and the tyres as both of these are likely to need replacing.

3 CAN YOU STILL GET SPARE PARTS FOR THE SCOOTER?

While you can still get spare parts for most scooters that have come out in the last decade, it is always worth checking before you sign on the dotted line. Don't forget to also be vigilant of scooters that are missing several body panels, as this can be a sign of a crash or that the scooter has been stolen.

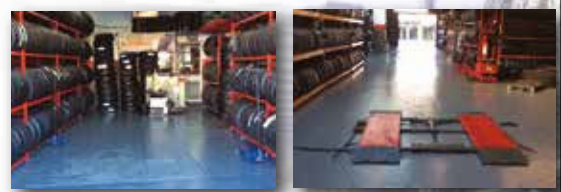
4 WHO IS THE SELLER?

You can choose to buy a used scooter from either a dealership or a private seller. While there are advantages and disadvantages for each option, a dealership is a safer bet as you can find out about their reputation online and they are more likely to provide detailed checks on their scooters.



Photo credit: Martin Charles Hately Shutterstock.com

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The Reading Rooms

The Billericay home of the Open Bible Learning Group

The Open Bible Learning Group – Why listen to them?

So many different voices seem to compete for our attention these days, both online and offline. Take, for example, the appeals that are made by so-called Christian churches... not only are there very many of them (hundreds of groups exist in Essex alone)... but at times they can each seem to have their own 'unique' teaching. How can this be right, given there is just one Bible?

Recently, I caught up with, a member of the Billericay Open Bible Learning Group (OBLG), and asked Simon, how OBLG have come to a clear and simple position on these things? "If something can be demonstrated from the one Bible – and shown to be consistently taught – then there really is no debate. The truth can only be found in God's Word, so that's where the investigation must both start and finish. Misunderstandings," he told me, "generally only begin when the Bible is set aside."

Of course, most paper Bibles are at least 1,000 pages long, so people can understandably feel a bit overwhelmed when they first approach the book. So I asked Simon, how can somebody who is not so familiar with the Bible build up at least a basic starting knowledge? Where should they start? What are the key themes or topics? And, how can someone get a bit of supportive guidance if needed?

"They're good questions, which is why, to help with all of this, the Billericay OBLG have created a series of so-called 'Bible Shorts' for YouTube on key topics (e.g. God; the Gospel; the Christian hope), each lasting



no more than five minutes. These shorts are intended to be just an introduction, but importantly they apply the same approach that any study should, with the Bible as the touchstone and it is constantly referred to."

Alongside these 'Bible Shorts', OBLG also available have various full length recordings of their recent talks and special presentations, which can be viewed or just listened to free of any obligation. So, if you can't make it along in-person or just want to start your Bible journey in your own time, why not check out their website openbiblelearninggroup.com or their YouTube channel [@openbiblelearninggroup](https://www.youtube.com/@openbiblelearninggroup). It only needs to start with five minutes of your time... with "Bible Shorts – An introduction to the Bible"



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 Sundays** 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 worship and to study. The topics to be covered in May include talks and seminars on Sunday afternoon at 2:30 pm:

- May 7th – The coronation of a new king
- May 14th – Putting God's plan together from Genesis to Revelation
- May 21st – Promises to Adam and Eve
- May 28th – Promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob
- June 1st – Promises to king David

Visit our website for a full list of times and events in and around Billericay. There are also links to recorded talks to stream or download or Free home self-study packs. Or why not our YouTube resources, "The Bible" special 3 part video series and Six 5 minute Bible Shorts on our free YouTube Channel [@openbiblelearninggroup](https://www.youtube.com/@openbiblelearninggroup)

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