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Editor's notes...

MAY 2021



Nik Allen, Editor

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

On April 9 we lost a true gentleman of this country. To me, the Duke of Edinburgh was a king in everything but name - a strong, brave, honest man who would shoot from the hip, press on with dignity and show character and personality in every one of his pursuits. No matter what you think of the royals, you have to respect that.

In the days that followed I was saddened by the barrage of complaints directed towards our media outlets - more than a hundred thousand complained to the BBC about its blanket coverage which

saw the usual schedule abandoned. You will never convince me that we don't have the ability to reach for the remote if there is something we don't want to watch, with the choice available to us nowadays. Did the Beeb go over the top? Possibly... it's become good at that recently. Did the Twitterati try to gatecrash Prince Philip's death by dragging out a crude selection of faux pas? Yes, sadly.

Does any of it matter? No. What counts for me is the fact that someone who devoted himself to this nation has gone. And more than that, the fact is we've lost another old-school warrior in a world increasingly overrun by woke. We need someone to step into Prince Philip's shoes... and quickly.

Nik Allen

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WILLIAM & KATE:

Ten years on

Looking back to celebrate William and Kate as they reach the milestone of their 10th wedding anniversary.

When asked, Prince William and Kate Middleton, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge, would doubtless suggest their first decade together as husband and wife has been wonderfully happy, uplifting and rewarding... albeit not without its challenges.

To most couples in the early throes of wedded bliss, the faint cry of babies and the bringing on of previously untapped levels of tiredness is a challenge enough. Yet it is to the couple's unending credit that they have never swayed away from their other royal duties, while having the ambition to pursue new challenges and initiatives. They are every bit the exemplars of people wanting the best for themselves, their family and those around them.

In isolation, those challenges of early parenthood – when we saw the arrival of Prince George in 2013, Princess Charlotte two years later and, most recently, Prince Louis in 2018 – are considerable, yet in recent years family events have compounded further the complications of life. The Prince Harry and Meghan Markle spat, notably, has left a devastating scar across how we perceive the Royal Family; then there's been the controversy of Prince Andrew and his links to Jeffrey Epstein; while the recent passing of William's grandfather, Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh, has further shrouded the institution at a time when the rest of the nation is finally managing to pull away from the darkness.

Regardless, the April 29, 2021, anniversary reaffirms the couple as a modern inspiration. The ceremony, 10 years ago, was a typically lavish affair, albeit laced with the style and individuality that William and Kate have wanted to imprint in the way they go about their duties.

Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams conducted the ceremony, as 26 million UK viewers watched it live. The Royal Family and the Middletons picked up the bill for almost 2,000 guests, with 300 special invitees going on to an evening dinner hosted by Prince Charles.

Naturally, the day went off without issue, and their work as a couple was only just beginning. Few would disagree now that, during an era when criticism of the royals has been fervent, William and Kate uphold the value and purpose of the Royal Family, even if others in the clan are less proactive.

Over the past decade, the prince has committed huge amounts of time to mental health issues, as well as opening up to a more mainstream audience with his love of sport; while the Duchess of Cambridge's elegant embracing of the mum role model is notable for the familiarity it has with Princess Diana and her boys.

More than anything else, William and Kate speak to the world with the shutters up. Rarely have a royal couple been so close to the people, with honesty, humility and even the ability to laugh at themselves.

It gives all of us hope that not only will the Windsors overcome this recent spate of negative events but, more than that, with William and Kate excellent exemplars, the institution of marriage – itself in decline – once again has those to uphold its values.

"We have always loved being married," says William. "I think we are more in love now than before, and we both truly feel we have found a soulmate who will be there forever."

BETTER THAN *Just O-kay*

Vernon Kay and 25 years on camera

There's something unmistakable about people from Bolton – think Peter Kay, Paddy McGuinness, Amir Khan. Perhaps it's the accent, perhaps the exuding of confidence, or maybe it's just an ability to look on life with uplifted energy.

Whatever the mechanics are, Vernon Kay, like so many of his Greater Manchester contemporaries, has them in abundance.

The husband of Tess Daly, Kay has just celebrated 25 years on screen – no mean feat for someone once described in the Nineties by Mark Lamarr as “a lanky indie kid with bad taste in clothes”.

That's ironic, given that Kay was actually first spotted at Clothes Show Live when he agreed to strut some clothes in return for free drinks. He went on to model for several years before using the catwalk as a platform to launch a TV career.

One of the many to emerge through the T4 stable, he has gone on to present *All Star Family Fortunes*, *Beat the Star* and *Splash!*, among others. Yet it was his appearance in *I'm a Celebrity... Get Me Out of Here* last year that truly reacquainted the watching public with someone who has also spread his talent across radio DJing (notably on Radio 1) and even movie cameos (in *Shaun of the Dead* and *Keith Lemon: The Film*).

A father of two, Kay famously talks down his talents, but has become one of terrestrial TV's go-to faces. Most recently, his *Game of Talents* show has allowed him to rediscover some of the spontaneity so associated with those T4 days.

“A lot of entertainment is very sanitised these days and I want to bring energy and unpredictability back to it,” says Kay, who said recently he blames the sterility of autocue for ruining so much live programming.

“Having fun is difficult when you're reading words off a script, so I'd love us to get back to really immersive TV that throws off the shackles.”

The shackles are off, Vernon.

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HOW TO CLEAN YOUR

Curtains

Did you know that you should be cleaning your curtains at least once a year and preferably once every three to six months? Although this may not sound like a lot, can you honestly remember the last time you gave yours a good wash? If not, don't worry. Discover below how to clean your curtains in five simple steps.

STEP ONE: Remove all the hooks and curtain weights and loosen the heading tape. If you are worried about the fabric shrinking, you may want to let down the hem. Take outside and shake well to remove any dust.

STEP TWO: Check the washing label of your curtains to see if they are machine washable. If they are made using a lightweight fabric such as cotton, they probably are. However, if they are large and heavy you may want to have them dry cleaned or wash them by hand. This is also the case for curtains made from velvet, wool, silk or chenille.

STEP THREE: If machine washable, place your curtains in your washing machine and add your usual detergent. Set the machine to either a "delicates" cycle or a cool wash with a slow spin to avoid damage.

STEP FOUR: If you want to iron your curtains, you should do this while they are still damp. Work lengthways, on the wrong side, stretching the fabric gently to prevent seams from puckering. If not, simply hang to dry either outside if the weather permits or inside until they are at least 95 per cent dry. Do not rub or wring out your curtains.

STEP FIVE: Thoroughly dust and clean your curtain tracks, windows and sills before hanging your clean curtains back up. You should also try to incorporate a weekly curtain vacuum into your cleaning schedule to keep them in tip-top condition for longer.

NEXT MONTH WE'LL TELL YOU HOW
TO CLEAN YOUR BLINDS



HOME & DIY

5 alternative uses for nail polish remover

Did you know that nail polish remover is not just for nails? Oh no, it can be used for a whole myriad of other purposes around the home.

1. To shine your shoes

Although you may be wary about using acetone on your prized shoe collection, as long as you only use it on patent shoes, you are completely safe. Simply dip a piece of kitchen towel in nail polish remover and gently buff to remove unsightly scuff marks.

2. To clean your china

If you are an avid tea drinker, your china may be prone to the odd mark or two. Remedy this by scrubbing these stubborn stains with a cotton bud soaked in nail polish remover. Wash as normal before using.

3. To remove paint from your windows

Painting your windows can inject a new lease of life into the interior and exterior of your home. However, flicks of paint on your glass are a hazard of the job. Remove any wayward paint by applying acetone, letting it settle for five minutes and then rubbing away with a damp cloth.

4. To dissolve superglue

Got a bit overenthusiastic with the superglue? Don't stress. Nail polish remover will quickly and easily unglue your hands or unclog the cap of your glue. Just apply to the affected area for instant results.

5. To get rid of ink stains

Whether you have spilt ink on your fabric sofa or your child has come home from school with their shirt covered in pen marks, acetone will save the day. Mix one part nail polish remover with two parts water and dab at the stain with a soft cloth.

Other uses:

- > To sanitise your beauty tools.
- > To clean blades – dip a cotton bud in the remover, apply and rinse with soap and water.
- > To smooth minor watch scratches – drop a tiny amount onto a cloth and gently buff affected area.

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WHY BUY A beanbag?

If you are wanting to update the furniture in your home without breaking the bank, you may want to consider investing in bean bag furniture. Synonymous with comfort and cosiness, the benefits of bean bags are numerous.

1. LOOKS STYLISH

Furniture for your home needs to look the part as well as feel it. Luckily, bean bags come in a wide variety of colours and designs, meaning you are guaranteed to be able to find one that complements your home's interior. Plus, you can accessorise your bag with cushions and throws in the same way you would a sofa.

2. OFFERS PORTABILITY

If you have a small home or limited space in your living room, a bean bag is a great option as it can be moved from one room to another with ease, owing to its lightweight nature. It can also be stored away when not in use.

3. EASY TO MAINTAIN

Bean bags come in a wide variety of different fabrics, meaning you can pick the perfect one for

your needs. Choose from faux leather that is super-easy to clean, cotton that is long-lasting, and even waterproof and UV resistant material for outdoor use.

4. SAVES YOU MONEY

Even with the seemingly never-ending furniture shop sales, it is still expensive to buy a new three-piece suite for your home, with prices potentially running into the thousands. Fortunately, bean bag furniture is extremely cost efficient and you can choose from single chairs, loungers, three-seaters and more.

5. IMPROVES YOUR HEALTH

If you suffer with either muscle or joint pain, then bean bag chairs can help you by moulding to your individual shape and offering optimal support. They can also help to relieve tension headaches and correct poor posture.



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INVINCIBLE houseplants

If you are looking for a hassle-free houseplant, either for yourself or as a gift for a friend, we have got you covered. Discover the below five houseplants that are virtually indestructible, even for those with a history of plant abuse.



1. DEVIL'S IVY

Incredibly popular, this hardy houseplant is stunning to look at with its unmistakable marbled leaves, and it has the added advantage of not needing much water or light. A great choice for popping on a bookshelf to brighten up your next Zoom meeting, but make sure you keep it away from children and pets as all parts are toxic.



2. SNAKE PLANT

Also known as mother-in-law's tongue, this houseplant is incredibly forgiving and therefore ideal for beginners. In the wild, snake plants can go a long time without seeing rain so they do not need frequent watering. Available in a range of different sizes, choose to place one on your home office desk or in a more impactful position in the hallway.



3. CAST IRON PLANT

This aptly named houseplant thrives on neglect and can even be grown in the dark, making it an excellent choice for rooms that do not provide much natural light. Recognisable by its deep-green glossy leaves, unfortunately, when grown indoors, you are unlikely to see its creamy purple flowers.



4. ZZ PLANT

The ZZ plant, or zamioculcas, is used to putting up with long periods of drought and can therefore survive if given to a frequent forgetful waterer. A graceful and elegant plant, place in a white-walled room for maximum impact.



5. CORN PLANT

If you are after a commanding but undemanding houseplant, then look no further. The corn plant, aka dracaena fragrans, grows tall and strong, even without your help, and may even deliver small, white flowers.



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Reed & BAMBOO interiors

HOW TO INCORPORATE REEDS AND BAMBOO INTO YOUR LIVING SPACES

We're more accustomed to seeing reeds and bamboo in outdoor settings, be they Mediterranean beachscapes, rustic country idylls or even Amazonian environments. And yet, the intensity of the recent trend that celebrates bringing the outdoors indoors has, inevitably, reached these attractive, affordable, hardwearing and versatile materials.

Bamboo, in particular, is en vogue. As a room divider it's smart and flexible; as stair rails it offers definition, detail and strength; while for picture frames and wall panels there is a smoothness and shapeliness that invites other items.

There's even been a move towards bamboo ceiling panels, harking back to thoughts of Asia and the Orient.

The real stepping stone to using bamboo comes in being able to alter our perception of what this evergreen perennial actually looks like. In its raw form it's long, light and stubborn, but breaking

down the base material to narrower, or slimmer and shorter strands means embracing devastatingly beautiful decorations, particularly when it comes to lampshades, with bamboo offering excellent delivery of light.

And going back to that idea of strength, consider chairs, headboards and storage furniture, with each piece offering a brightness that pulls into focus echoes of northern territories such as Scandinavia and Canada.

What's more, because bamboo is a sustainable material, it's a green option. And with that comes easy maintenance – cleaning is simple, quick and stress-free.

Reeds are often regarded as more economical than the trusty bamboo. They don't come from the same plant, but can mimic colour, strength and style by being weaved together – often reinforced by wire. The look is great and, if anything, can allow ambitious interior designers to intensify the detail on show.

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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



Photo credit: Ruby Ward @heartoflondon11

Burglar jailed for more than four years after multiple offences

A burglar has been jailed following a series of offences in Brentwood.

Between October 26 and November 8 last year, Jamie Estabrook (pictured inset) carried out three burglaries and four robberies at various businesses in Brentwood.

In one incident, he assaulted a shopworker as he was closing up, punching him from behind before grabbing his bag and fleeing.

He also targeted the same Tesco Express store in London Road four times – burgling it three times and also carrying out a robbery there.

Officers were able to identify the 34-year-old after studying CCTV footage.

Officers seized items of clothing worn during the incidents from Estabrook's address in Kings Road,

Brentwood.

He was charged and later admitted three counts of burglary and four counts of robbery.

At Basildon Crown Court on Tuesday, March 30, he was jailed for four and a half years.

Detective sergeant David Wilkinson, from Brentwood CID, said: "Jamie Estabrook is a prolific burglar and robber and has little regard for the possessions of others.

"He will have created a huge amount of fear for those working in the shops during the robberies and no one should be left feeling that way in their workplace.

"Through our thorough investigation, we were able to gather evidence against him which left him with no option but to admit his crimes. He will now spend the foreseeable future in prison."

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Promising future after council completes purchase



Brentwood Borough Council has purchased The Baytree Shopping Centre and Academy Place as part of its commitment to enhance the town centre.

The purchase of The Baytree Shopping Centre will unlock the town centre for redevelopment and help support the borough's economic recovery by becoming a key leisure and retail destination in South Essex.

Initial plans indicate the potential for a mixed-use scheme incorporating improved retail, leisure and community space.

Councillor Chris Hossack, Brentwood Borough Council leader, said: "The opportunity to buy The Baytree Centre could not have come at a better time as the Centre is fundamental in supporting the regeneration and transformation plans of our town centre.

"The centre is at the heart of our town's historic and retail core. This acquisition means we now have full control of this important strategic site that is critical to delivering a more vibrant town centre experience for our residents and visitors."

Academy Place, which was built in Brook Street in 1990, is a 1.54-acre site that is currently let out to a range of companies, employing a total of more than 200 people.

Dedicated students perform in pandemic production

Brentwood School students have come together to create an ambitious and unique pandemic production.

Lockdown: The Musical follows the story of Neo and Chloe, a young couple forced apart as a result of the national lockdown. The performance is a 40-minute, light-hearted insight into a teenage perspective of COVID-19.

The impressive project was produced and performed in just six weeks entirely under lockdown restrictions. It is performed by eight members of the school's

Upper Sixth, who were unable to perform in the annual school musical in December, which was cancelled as a result of the pandemic.

Matthew Bulmer, director of the performing arts, who co-created the project, says: "We all felt upset for our Upper Sixth students when the winter musical was cancelled this year.

"It is the highlight of many of our students' seven-year stint at the school, especially those who have given everything to the performing arts during that time. Mr Cooper and I made the decision to write something special for these dedicated and talented individuals in January and, a few weeks later, here we are."

To watch the full performance, head to www.youtube.com/watch?v=5KActZtKT0Q

Church volunteers recognised with award

Two volunteers have been recognised for their exceptional service after leading a campaign to fund repairs for a church in Brentwood.

All Saints' Church was considerably damaged during an illegal rave, inspiring Astrid Gillespie and Rev Canon Paul Hamilton to set up a fundraising page on JustGiving. Within days, they had raised an astonishing £22,000.

As a result of their dedicated work, they have been awarded the Digital Heritage Hero Award.

By speaking to news outlets and advertising the fundraising page on Facebook, Astrid and Paul raised sufficient funds to carry out repairs to the church and address additional conservation works.

Faith Kitchen, heritage director at Ecclesiastica, said: "As the leading insurer of Grade I listed buildings in the UK, we're passionate about Britain's heritage. We're proud to sponsor the Heritage Hero Awards, and this year celebrates some deserving winners for their outstanding contribution to the heritage sector during an incredibly challenging year."





News from THE ROTARY CLUB

Brentwood

The Rotary Club of Brentwood is starting to return to some of its normal activities as lockdown starts to ease. Since we have been able to meet outside in groups of six, one of our members has been organising weekly walks, with each walk pitched at a different level of difficulty to encourage involvement by all members.

An enforced need to operate in a socially distanced way changed the way we had to go about our work. Since the beginning of the first lockdown, we have been holding a monthly quiz online. The quiz has grown in popularity and funds raised have been at an all-time high. The quiz team has now become so successful that it has also been running quizzes for other organisations, such as the Women's Institute. If you are interested in participating in one of our quizzes, visit our website: www.rotaryclubofbrentwood

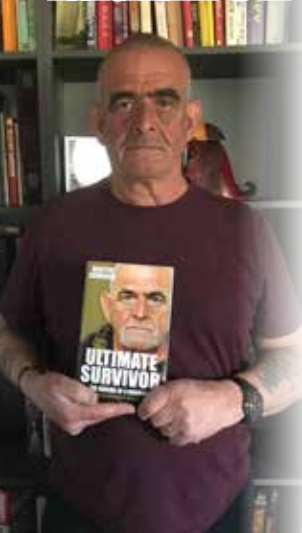
Each year we hold a charity golf day. This event not only provides a fun day out, but also raises funds for



Stock image

some of our local charities. Last year we had to cancel the golf day, but this year we are optimistic that it will go ahead. The provisional date is Monday, July 12, 2021, and it will be held at Thorndon Park Golf Club. We will have to adjust some of our arrangements to ensure that people can participate in a safe manner. The golf day is open to anyone who wishes to participate. If you are interested in finding out more, you can contact Chris Rastin on em.rastin@btinternet.com

Man reveals his one-of-a-kind life



A man from Brentwood has released his first book about the difficulties he has faced in his life, from being brutally beaten as a child and attempting suicide at the age of 12 to eventually retiring as a multimillionaire.

The book, *Ultimate Survivor*, features an array of mind-boggling adventures and is laced with dark humour.

Ultimate Survivor tells a story that involves warship sieges, sexual abuse and hair-raising IRA ambushes, as well a death-defying run-in with notorious Sinn Fein politician Martin McGuinness and a job as a bodyguard for Prince Bandar of Saudi Arabia.

Author Martin Edwards told **VISION**BrentwoodOngar: "The book took about three years to write. I got in touch with a ghostwriter, and I decided to go ahead and do it. "Everyone loves the book so far. They say that it makes them sad, happy, excited, and that it makes them laugh too. There are so many stories in there.

"What I'm basically trying to say is that whatever life throws at you, at whatever stage of your life, you can come out of it on the other side and get through it."

Martin added: "The profits will be going towards supporting military mental health and vulnerable children, and we'll probably pick personal ones, so we know exactly where the money's going and what it's being spent on."

To purchase the book, head to: www.amazon.co.uk/Ultimate-Survivor-Making-Martin-Edwards/dp/1999333993

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Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar



LOCAL NEWS BRENTWOOD

Now most of our High Street shops have reopened, the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on some national chains has become clearer. There is no doubt the High Street has lost some beloved names during the pandemic, for a multitude of reasons, but all is not lost.

In Brentwood, we have lost Laura Ashley at the western end of the High Street, while issues with lease negotiations have seen Waterstones, The Edinburgh Woollen Mill and FatFace close for the time being.

However, the investment a couple of years ago by Marks and Spencer in its flagship store in Brentwood means business there has continued to be strong. And the small independent stores – especially those in the increasingly vibrant Crown Street – appear to

have come through, thanks to government support for small businesses, plus the sheer determination by their proprietors to adapt to online sales and click and collect.

Recently, I was able to catch up with Mike Hawkins and Paul Beresford, from Brentwood Business Partnership, and council leader councillor Chris Hossack to discuss the future of Brentwood's High Street and the council's acquisition of The Baytree Shopping Centre.

I heard their concerns that it is now too easy for



landlords to change the use of their high-street properties and offices from retail and business to housing. I'm confident there is room for a mix of residential and retail, creating business for the shops and easy access to goods and services for residents.

With the council now owning The Baytree Shopping Centre, it is a major player on the High Street and can do even more to help shape how our town looks and feels. As the country rebounds from COVID-19 there is an opportunity to safeguard and strengthen our town centres for the decades ahead if we get all stakeholders round the table. I look forward to being part of these discussions in the months to come.

Man charged with attempted murder

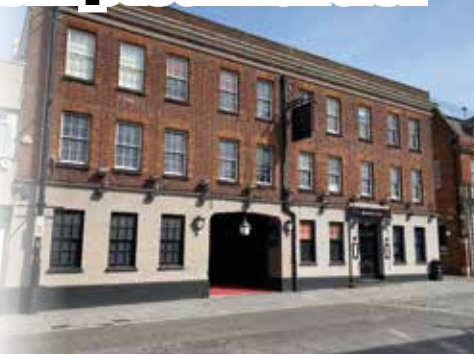
A man has been charged with a number of offences in connection with a 2017 attempted murder investigation in Brentwood.

Martin Stokes, 27, of no fixed address, was arrested in London on April 10, and has been charged with attempted murder, two counts of ABH, dangerous driving and violent disorder.

His arrest was carried out as part of an investigation into an incident in which three people were involved in a collision with a vehicle outside Sugar Hut in Brentwood High Street, at about 3.10am on Sunday April 2, 2017.

They were all taken to hospital with serious injuries.

Stokes is due to appear in court on May 10 and is currently being remanded in custody.



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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood

LOCAL NEWS ONGAR



Photo credit: Andy Duncan

Historic railway receives cash boost ahead of reopening

The Epping Ongar Railway has received a grant of £62,000 from the government's Culture Recovery Fund to help the organisation reopen after lockdown.

Culture Secretary Oliver Dowden CBE MP announced in March that nearly £400million has been awarded to thousands of cultural organisations across the country, including the Epping Ongar Railway, in the latest round of support from the Culture Recovery Fund.

The award will help the railway look ahead to the spring and summer and plan for reopening. It follows a previous grant awarded to the railway in the autumn of last year.

Dean Walton, general manager, said: "The Epping Ongar Railway, its volunteers and supporters are grateful for this significant grant. We will be using it to make final preparations before we reopen, in line with government guidance, in late May."

Oliver Dowden CBE MP said: "Our record-breaking Culture Recovery Fund has already helped thousands of culture and heritage organisations across the country survive the biggest crisis they've ever faced.

"Now we're staying by their side as they prepare to welcome the public back through their doors – helping our cultural gems plan for reopening and thrive in the better times ahead."



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Council vows to fight against kerbstones



The “diabolical” state of verges and broken kerbstones in the parish has been reported to Ongar Town Council, which has vowed to continue to report problem areas.

A resident wrote to the council highlighting the state of the verges and broken kerbstones in Queensway and St Peter’s Avenue, after her car hit a kerbstone that was in the middle of the road.

She said: “The kerbstones have been an issue for some time and are progressively getting worse and more of a danger to pedestrians and road users, let alone the eyesore they are for everyone.

“Even when they do get replaced and fixed, the issue is back a short time later because of large and heavy vehicles having to mount the kerbs and pavements to get round the roads.”

Town council clerk Michael Letch acknowledged the letter, stating: “The state of the roads on the Shelley Estate are a matter of concern to councillors and they are working to find a way to get the highways authority to prioritise them.”

Councillor Lawrence Mendoza said the problem on the Shelley Estate had been reported to Essex County Council deputy leader Kevin Bentley, who replied that the situation would be “monitored”.

Container store for 3Food4U secured by town council

A container for use by the 3Food4U charity to store non-perishable items is to be purchased by Ongar Town Council and sited at Jubilee Park in Ongar.

3Food4U will use the container for the foreseeable future, and when it is no longer required by the charity it will be offered to the Ongar Community Sports Trust which manages the Jubilee Park facilities.

Councillors at a recent town council meeting agreed

to spend up to £2,000 on the purchase and siting of the container, subject to planning approval being granted.

3Food4U founder Pesh Kapasiawala told the meeting 3Food4U helps between 50 and 60 families at its weekly Ongar session at Zinc Arts.

Pesh said: “We get huge amounts of donations and need huge amounts to support 300 families a week across the Epping Forest district. It would be tremendous to get some storage.”

Man pleads guilty to seven fly-tipping offences

An unlicensed waste carrier who pleaded guilty to seven counts of fly-tipping in Ongar and Stapleford Tawney has received a prison sentence and a curfew.

Behnam Dehghani, who is now living in Ilford, gave his plea at a court hearing in February 2020, but owing to COVID-19 restrictions, the sentencing hearing was not held until March 2021.

Evidence gathered by the council’s Environment and Neighbourhood Team led to the prosecution.

Magistrates sentenced Dehghani to nine months’ imprisonment suspended for 12 months, a three-month curfew between 7pm and 7am, a 12-month driving disqualification and a 10-year Criminal Behaviour Order.

He must also pay the prosecution costs of £2,600 and a victim surcharge of £100.

Councillor Holly Whitbread, cabinet member for housing and community services, said: “This council is committed to taking action against fly-tipping. Anyone found fly-tipping, or not complying with their household duty of care, may be given a £400 fixed penalty. But in this case, owing to the prolific nature of Dehghani’s actions, the matter was prosecuted through the courts.

“Fly-tipping is a blight on the Epping Forest district, and costs landowners across the East of England on average £1,000 for each incident. It costs Essex Council taxpayers more than £1million a year to clear fly-tipping from the highway and other council-owned land.”





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PUZZLES & TRIVIA



PUZZLES

Answers: see end of The VISION Listings

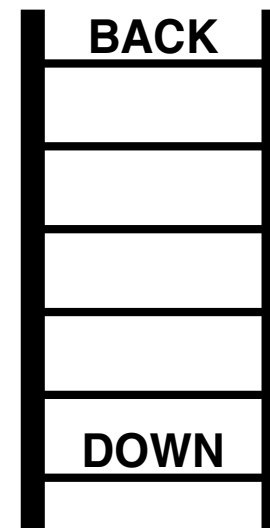
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DID YOU KNOW?

- ▶ Lots of plants are used as dyes. For example, teabags and stewed onion skins
- ▶ According to Guinness World Records, the tallest planted tree was a Eucalyptus regnans planted in Dunedin, New Zealand. It measured 82.25 metres on November 15, 2018
- ▶ Pollen from trees provides essential food for bees in the early spring
- ▶ Orange carrots were created by crossing various other colours of the vegetable
- ▶ Seeds can be dispersed in several ways. Some of the most common are the wind, water and animals
- ▶ The stem of a plant is used to transport water and nutrients to different areas
- ▶ Mushrooms have their own immune system

WORD LADDER



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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HISTORY

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BONNIE & CLYDE

Two destructive lives combine to fuel a potent love story



The glamorisation of Bonnie and Clyde in modern culture is certainly at odds with the murder and robbery spree that led to the FBI pursuing them and, ultimately, effecting their fatal end in 1934.

Having first met four years earlier, Bonnie Parker and Clyde Champion Barrow had both already been on the wrong side of the law, and the signs were there of the peril they could cause to the unsuspecting, not least when Bonnie helped Clyde smuggle a gun into prison in 1930, when he was locked up for a robbery charge. He escaped but was recaptured, yet remarkably was released just 18 months later.

Their crime spree began in earnest in 1932. Joined by three other criminals, they undertook a number of robberies, escaping capture by any means possible. Indeed, by the time their criminal lives were brought to a halt, it's said they had murdered at least 13 people.

As well as seeking financial gains, the couple sought to break convicts out of jail, notably cohort Raymond Hamilton from Eastham State Prison Farm at Waldo, Texas, who was serving sentences totalling in excess of 200 years.

By the middle of April 1934, the FBI had traced the pair to a remote part of Louisiana following the couple's theft of a motor vehicle. Posters were distributed to police staff throughout various states and the hunt was on.

Intelligence suggested they were due to return to the location of a party that was held near Sailes in Louisiana two days previously. On May 23, 1934, officers from the county and neighbouring Texas converged to create an ambush on the side of a highway, concealing themselves in bushes. Bonnie and Clyde appeared in a motor car and, unable to turn and flee, were killed instantly as more than 100 shots rained through the front windscreen of the vehicle.

Photo credit: Everett/Shutterstock



TECHNOLOGY

SMART savings

As well as offering convenience, did you know that smart technology can actively help you to save money?

Check out the best budget-busting smart gadgets for your home below.

BLINK – The Mortgage Magnet

Launched this spring, Blink is a free fridge magnet that flashes to let you know about better mortgage deals. Simply sign up to Dashly, a mortgage comparison site with a difference, and your new magnet will alert you when a better deal becomes available.

Possible savings: £2,620 per year

LEAKBOT – The Leak Detector

Did you know that one in three households experiences a leak each year? Avoid this costly occurrence by investing in a LeakBot, a handy device that clips to your mains water supply pipe and detects leaks. If you have insurance with Neos, Aviva or Legal & General, you can get a LeakBot for free. Retail price of £149.

Potential savings: £633 per detected leak

HYDRAO – The Water-Saving Shower Head

If you love a long shower but don't like the high water bills that come with one, the Hydrao shower head is the smart gadget for you. Using water more economically than a standard shower head and with a light that changes from green to red when you've used 50 litres of water, this device costs £62.

Potential savings: £135 per person per year

DRY:SOON – The Heated Aired

For those who rely heavily on their tumble dryer, this money-saving smart device is exactly what you need. Costing just 6p per hour to run, compared to 36p per hour for a tumble dryer, the Dry:Soon heated ainer has the ability to slash your drying costs. Retail price of £149.99.

Potential savings: £51 per year based on twice weekly usage

TAPO – The Smart Plug

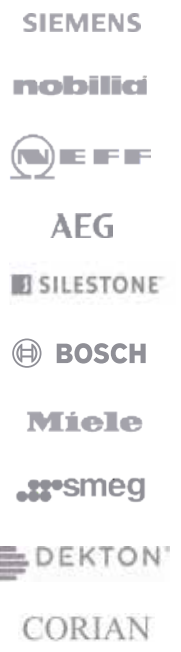
Only £8.99 to buy, the Tapo plug allows you to remotely turn on and off appliances such as fans, electric heaters and dehumidifiers, saving you money and helping the environment.

Potential savings: £128 per year



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FIRST AID for pets

Knowing what to do in an emergency can be the difference between life and death when it comes to your beloved pets. From what to put in your pet first aid kit to the benefits of undertaking a pet first aid course, keep reading to ensure you are equipped to help your pet when they need it most.

PET FIRST AID CHECKLIST

All pet owners should have a pet first aid kit, for use both at home and when out and about. You should also keep your vet's number stored in your phone in case of an emergency. Your kit should contain:

- + Bandages
- + Blunt-ended scissors
- + Wound wash and dressing
- + Cotton wool
- + Tweezers (standard and tick)
- + Self-adhesive tape
- + Vinyl gloves
- + Foil blanket
- + Antiseptic wipes
- + A blanket (to be used as a stretcher)

WHAT CAN I EXPECT TO LEARN ON A PET FIRST AID COURSE?

Although not intended as a replacement for professional veterinary care, a pet first aid course can give you the skills needed to deal with an

emergency should it arise.

During a pet first aid course, you can expect to learn:

- + Overall pet health
- + Tips on examining your pet
- + Pet digestion
- + Signs of dehydration
- + How to treat burns
- + How to treat a choking pet
- + Basic CPR for pets
- + Signs of frostbite
- + What to do if your pet goes into shock
- + Drowning first aid
- + How to approach an injured animal
- + How to check vital signs

The exact course material may differ from one course to another.

WHERE CAN I GET FREE PET FIRST AID INFORMATION?

The People's Dispensary for Sick Animals offers a free downloadable pet first aid guide on its website www.pdsa.org.uk/get-involved/our-campaigns/free-first-aid-guide

It also offers local pet first aid courses, although you will need to check if these are up and running again after a temporary suspension of service owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.



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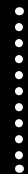
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A PRINCE *among men*

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF HRH PRINCE PHILIP, DUKE OF EDINBURGH

Meticulous, measured, majestic and more than a little eccentric... and that was just the funeral procession – HRH Prince Philip departed these strange shores just two months short of his 100th birthday, leaving behind a partner so hopelessly and publicly bereaved, and a nation of admirers wondering who could live up to the Duke of Edinburgh's lofty lovability.

Rarely is someone's passing met with almost universal solemnity and respect. It appears we all admired Prince Philip for different reasons – his faithful devotion to Queen Elizabeth II; his stolid determination to affect positive change; his humorous tendency to stray over the boundary of political correctness; or perhaps simply because he embodied so wholly that 'grandad' figure. Whatever it is, whatever it was, he had it, and in the stuffy silliness of modern media, he was exactly the antidote so many of us needed.

On Saturday, April 17, Prince Philip was laid to rest. In a ceremony he planned and choreographed himself, his coffin was lifted onto the back of a modified Land Rover Defender. Decorated in a stunning matt

Photo credit: Tim Graham/Shutterstock



Photo credit: Tim Rooke/Shutterstock

bottle green, the hearse was Philip's own creation, while various other touches clearly bore the mark of a man who wanted to slip away with energetic, original reflections of life, not the formal bleakness of most ceremonies.

There was the empty seat on the carriage, decorated with his blanket, flat cap, whip, brown gloves and pot containing a sugar cube for the ponies; then his military cap and sword on a coffin adorned with the most beautiful personal standard flag which referenced his overseas roots, family name and Edinburgh Castle. Meanwhile, various other marine references were present during the ceremony, each a nod to his cherished naval career, which came to an end in 1951.

In truth, there was so much of this special life to be celebrated. He was born on June 10, 1921 in Corfu, his family holding both Greek and Danish royal heritage. Banished from their homeland, he spent parts of his early life in France and Germany before settling in Britain.

It wasn't an easy childhood – his mother was admitted to a psychiatric institution, and he was separated from his family after landing in the UK. He studied at Cheam School before relocating to Scotland. He served in the British Navy during the Second World War, despite members of his family effectively fighting for the opposition as part of the Axis.

He denounced his Greek and Danish titles and adopted the surname Mountbatten – from his mother's side – so he could marry Princess Elizabeth in 1947 at Westminster Abbey, eight years after they had first met.

He was doted on by his four children – Prince Charles, Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward (Prince Edward will now take his title) – and never wavered from his role as the Queen's consort... in fact, the longest in royal history. A passionate supporter of everything she did, he also undertook his own projects, notably the Duke of Edinburgh's Award which, to this day, continues to promote youth achievement across many different disciplines.

He enjoyed polo, boat racing, piloting aeroplanes, painting and antiques, and while deteriorating health in recent years proved concerning, it was supposed he had recovered from a recent stay at St Bartholomew's Hospital; yet he slipped away peacefully on April 9, 2021 at Windsor Castle.

In total, almost 14 million of us watched the Duke of Edinburgh's funeral, and even the staunchest anti-royal must have pitied the senior Windsors being forced to display their grief in public. Such are the realities of a state funeral, and so it is conditioned that the only follow-on from a life played out in the public eye is a memorial on the same terms.

Prince Philip was born of a different time and a different generation of royalty, yet he fit so wonderfully into modern-day society and brought joy to many.

His unique, charismatic, eccentric take on the world is something we just don't see very often these days, with most public figures keeping their cards close to their chests for fear of repercussions.

His truly one-of-a-kind presence will be sorely missed by the Royal Family, the nation and the world.

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I think we can all agree that the sooner we see the back of 2020 and this dreadful corona virus the better. That said, there are also some heart warming positives that we can take out of this situation. It has often been said that we can only really get to know one another and realise what is truly important in times of crisis. I think few would argue that in this case what has proven to be important is local community spirit.

When talking to the Manager of Cloudy2Clear windows Chris Miller it became clear that these values have been held dear for a number of years. Since starting the business some years ago Cloudy2Clear have remained true to their core values of

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KIDS



CHECKING IN

WHY PROTECTING THE YOUNG PEOPLE AROUND YOU MEANS INSISTING ON THE RELEVANT CHECKS

In the past decade or so, Criminal Record Checks (CRCs) have become commonplace in situations where organisations need to safeguard the welfare of children, young people and vulnerable adults. And this can be the case in everything from 9–5 employers ensuring their staff have been honest in job applications, to volunteers working for charities, right through to local sports teams safeguarding the welfare of young players.

The checks are done by the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) and take the form of a simple and relatively cheap process that takes a couple of weeks. The application can be submitted by the individual or an employee (but only after an offer of employment has been made – in other words, for a successful applicant, not for an interview candidate).

The request goes to the DBS, where a criminal background check will be made. A certificate is subsequently issued that lists any convictions.

The process has become an essential part of

verifying people who are in positions of responsibility where young and vulnerable people are concerned, and replaces what was previously a somewhat more convoluted process between the Criminal Records Bureau and the Independent Safeguarding Authority. By merging these two organisations into one entity, the DBS, in 2012, the government was able to streamline welfare checks, which meant not only a safer and more comprehensive system, but also one where people could begin helping and assisting youngsters without having to go through swarms of red tape.

Of course, while a DBS check will list noted convictions, organisations can and do undertake additional protection, welfare and safeguarding training. And as ever, as parents, the most effective reference to those helping our children comes through our own communication with both our loved ones and the organisation – it always pays to be vigilant.

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Show your BBQ some TLC as Lockdown eases

The start of the beautiful British Spring is just upon us with some great bank holiday weekends to look forward to, your BBQs will probably be getting its first airing after having been packed away for the winter. This also coincides this year with us being allowed to have another household come and join us socially in our gardens.

However, if you want to be able to eat from it safely this spring, you will need to do a spot of cleaning before you use it for the first time.

Luckily, the experts at OvenGleaners have some top tips for brilliant BBQs so that you can cook with confidence and look forward to another year without the dreaded scraping of months' old burnt on grease hindering your lovely fresh food.

'Greasy BBQ grills are as much a part of the great British spring as

the ever changing weather,' explains OvenGleaners Rob Wright.

'They are a bit of a nightmare to deal with and rather a mess. The key to getting the very best from them each time is to show them the same love that you would give to your kitchen oven.'

1. Soak it up

Clean those racks before you start cooking on them - burnt on grease turns to carbon and then gets stuck to your lovely fresh food. Clean the racks by soaking them overnight in your bath with some washing powder, then rinse them off. Or, scrub them with washing up liquid and a wet scourer!

2. Liner time

Keep the racks clean in the first place by cooking on a non-stick oven liner. Just place the non-stick

liner on top of your usual BBQ rack and cook your food on top of that. Then, just rinse the liner under the tap with soapy water or pop them in the dishwasher once you've finished cooking.

3. Rust away

Before your first BBQ of the year, your trusty BBQ needs to be cleaned thoroughly before using it. It might seem a pain now but you'll thank me for this later! Ensure that the whole of your BBQ is completely degreased before attempting to cook on it. You really don't want last year's burnt on grease spoiling your delicious fresh BBQ meats, fish and halloumi slices!

If you'd like OvenGleaners to help with cleaning your BBQ then call Rob Wright on 01277 361760 today.



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BBQ IQ

THE DOS AND DON'TS OF GRILLING OUTSIDE

DO expand your repertoire beyond sausages and burgers. From slow-roasted delectable cuts of beef to a delicately grilled entire sea bass, there really is no limit to what can be cooked on the barbecue provided you get your temperature and technique right.

DON'T only barbecue in the summer. It is almost criminal that we limit our grilling to just one season when so many other meals could benefit from being barbecued. Whether slow-roasting pork belly for a sumptuous Sunday lunch or smoking ribs for a night in front of the footie, your barbecue is waiting to bring that added wallop of flavour, whatever the season.

DO let the flavour linger. Another plus of the outdoor grill is that it requires little maintenance. During periods of regular use, you can simply heat it up and brush off any food debris with a steel brush - this will also help preserve your non-stick seasoning.

DON'T leave it to the elements. Barbecues may be hardy, but they aren't invincible, so cover them up when not in use.

DO your research. Just as you wouldn't blast every cut of meat with heat in the oven, the key to successful grilling is to adapt your barbecue accordingly by having areas with and without coal underneath. For example, steaks benefit from a few minutes over really high heat before being taken off to rest, whereas chicken thighs need a few minutes over a direct heat and then a longer period with indirect heat to cook properly.

DON'T go full caveman. Grilling may seem like a primitive cooking method, but using the right tools will really enhance your experience and the food you produce. Whether using chimney fire starters to expertly preheat coals, or heatproof gloves for effortless handling of utensils, or a meat thermometer for supreme cooking accuracy, these nifty gadgets are more than just a gimmick... although the "kiss the cook" apron remains optional.





Jicama

The jicama, also known as a Mexican yam bean, is a starchy root vegetable that is recognisable by its thick, brown skin and turnip shape. Low in calories and sweet in taste, this veg makes a great alternative to the humble potato.

WHAT DOES JICAMA TASTE LIKE?
The jicama has been described as a cross between a potato and a pear owing to its distinctive flavour which is both nutty and sweet. Its flesh is juicy and crunchy and, because it has a fairly mild taste, it blends well with other flavours.

WHAT ARE THE HEALTH BENEFITS OF JICAMA?
The perfect vegetable for people with diabetes, the jicama is naturally low in sugar but still sweet to taste. It is also high in fibre, a great source of vitamin C and low in fat and calories.

IS JICAMA SAFE TO EAT?
It is worth noting that only the root vegetable of the

jicama plant is safe to eat, as the rest, including the beans and flowers, contain rotenone, a natural insecticide that can be toxic to humans in high doses. You should also remove the brown skin before consuming.

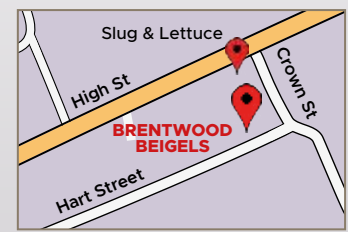
HOW TO USE JICAMA
> Slice thinly and add raw to a vegetable salad or Mexican fruit salad for added crunch
> Sauté with other veg such as broccoli and carrots
> Use as a substitute for water chestnuts in a stir-fry
> Bake in the oven or place in an air fryer for healthy chips

HOW TO STORE JICAMA
The most important thing to remember when storing jicama is that you must keep it dry, as any moisture can cause rot and mould. Store unwrapped at room temperature if still whole or, once cut, wrap tightly in cling film and store in the fridge for up to one week. Alternatively, wrap a whole jicama in foil and freeze for up to one year.



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FOOD ALLERGY

AWARENESS WEEK: May 9 - 16, 2021

An annual event, Food Allergy Awareness Week aims to raise awareness of different food allergies and to improve public understanding of what can sometimes be a life-threatening condition. From cow's milk to peanuts, eggs to shellfish, discover the most common food allergies in the UK below.



Peanuts

Peanut allergy affects around one in 50 children and has seen a significant increase in cases in recent decades. Typically developed in early childhood, symptoms of a peanut allergy usually occur within minutes of contact and can include nausea, shortness of breath and skin reactions such as hives, redness and swelling.



Cow's milk

Affecting mostly babies and young children, a cow's milk (protein) allergy is usually outgrown by the age of five. Common symptoms include swelling of the lips or tongue and breathing difficulties, and these can occur within minutes or many hours after ingesting.



Eggs

Another allergy that is much more common in young children than adults, an egg allergy can mean being allergic to all forms of egg, or only to loosely cooked and raw egg. Egg allergy symptoms include skin inflammation, sneezing, runny nose and shortness of breath and/or chest tightness.



Shellfish

The most common allergy in adults, around 60 per cent of people experience their first allergic reaction to shellfish once they have reached adulthood. Shrimp is the most prevalent shellfish allergen for both children and adults. Allergic reactions to shellfish can be unpredictable, with common symptoms including swelling of the lips, mouth, tongue, throat and face.

What is an anaphylactic shock?

Anaphylaxis is a severe and potentially life-threatening reaction to a trigger, such as an allergy. Symptoms include:

- > Feeling faint
- > Wheezing
- > Clammy skin
- > Collapsing or losing consciousness
- > Difficulty breathing
- > A fast heartbeat
- > Confusion and/or anxiety

If someone has symptoms of anaphylaxis, you should use an adrenaline auto-injector if they have one and call 999 immediately.

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MAY BIRTH FLOWER OF THE MONTH:

Lily



The May birth flower is the delicate and sweetly scented lily. Available in a wide range of vibrant colours, each shade conveys a different meaning. Planted as bulbs, lilies are perfect for containers and flower borders, making them a great choice for small and large gardens alike.

What does the lily symbolise

As mentioned above, the lily holds many different meanings which are dependent upon its colour:

- > Pink lilies symbolise femininity and admiration
- > Red lilies represent love and passion
- > Orange lilies convey confidence and energy
- > Yellow lilies are used to say thank you
- > White lilies portray purity and rebirth

What does this birth flower say about you

If your birth flower is the lily, you are said to be practical, with the ability to tackle even the most challenging situations. Contrary to the toxic lily flower, you are sweet, tender and with a huge capacity to love, meaning that others always feel safe in your company.

How to grow lilies

Lilies are planted as bulbs and are ideal for placing in containers or in sunny borders. There are two main types of lily that you can choose from: Oriental lilies and Asiatic lilies. The former give off an intense aroma and are large in stature, whereas the latter are available in a wide variety of vibrant colours but are sadly unscented.

Lily bulbs thrive in moist, acid soils, so if placed in a container, be sure to add ericaceous compost.

Do lilies come back every year

Lilies are perennial flowers which mean that they will return year after year. Requiring minimal care if planted correctly, make sure you do not overcrowd your bulbs and place in full sun where possible.



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GARDENING



GARDEN OF LIFE

MOISTURE in the air

In the final part of our series that shows how even the most urban garden can be a haven for the wonders of wildlife and the nurturing of nature, we look at the role of moisture in this wondrous ecosystem.

While we may bemoan the washing getting wet when we forget to bring it indoors, the cycle of moisture in our gardens is perhaps nature's greatest wonder of them all. Consider it – we've all gazed out across our lawns or poked around a plant on a window ledge and known that when nature either dries out or floods, the end is nigh.

On a local level, moisture in our plant soil is the difference between a flowering plant and a wilting one; or perhaps a ripe, juicy tomato and one that fails to develop.

On a national, mass-market scale then, getting the moisture content right means looking after the production of every variety of crop, for both human

and animal consumption.

And yet, controlling moisture goes far beyond even that, because the density of water in the soil is vital in regulating the exchange of water and heat energy between plants and the atmosphere, via evaporation. This leads to the production of weather patterns all across the world, and especially determines levels of precipitation.

Even on its way into the atmosphere, moisture is stabilising our climate, plus helping animal life that's dependent on perspiration to regulate internal body temperature – something that's key to survival.

It all adds up to the fact that the humble bit of soil around your petunias is, in the most minute of ways, contributing towards the maintenance and welfare of the flora and fauna and of people's lives in towns, villages and cities all across the world, whether their fear is flash floods, droughts or even potential starvation.



GUIDE TO GARDEN GAZEBOS



Thinking about putting up a gazebo in your garden? Before you rush to your nearest DIY store to buy one, there are several factors that you first need to consider.

1. SURFACE AREA

The surface area of a gazebo is determined by its length and width and needs to be calculated before you make a purchase. As well as working out how much space you have in your garden, you need to consider what equipment and furniture you intend to place under it. Typically, gazebos tend to be at least two metres wide, although you can find smaller ones for more compact gardens.

2. FRAME MATERIAL

There are several options to choose from for the main frame of your gazebo. These include:
> Powder-coated steel. Fairly heavy and inexpensive.
> Aluminium. Resistant to rust and lightweight.
> Wrought iron. Strong and durable.
> Resin. Very lightweight and good value for money.
> Wood. Attractive and fairly long-lasting.

3. CANOPY MATERIAL

Gazebo canopies are typically made out of either polyethylene or polyester, with the former being the most commonly used material for budget gazebos. Polyester, on the other hand, is more expensive but offers superior quality and is less permeable. You may also wish to purchase gazebo curtains for even more protection against the elements, and these are available in the same materials as the canopy itself.

4. TYPES OF GAZEBO

There are several different types of gazebos that you can choose from, including:
> Freestanding gazebo. These typically have a metal framework that is topped with a fabric canopy.
> Lean-to gazebo. These require a wall to lean against for support and are popular on decking.
> Pop-up gazebo. Ideal for temporary use, pop-ups tend to be more cost-effective and basic in their design.



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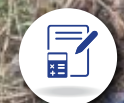
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With summer staycations being on the cards for many families this year, homes by the sea are attracting more interest than ever before.

But if you are thinking of making a more permanent move to a coastal location, check out the below hotspots that are proving to be popular with home buyers across the UK.

SWANAGE, DORSET - *average asking price £394,762*

Only six miles from Bournemouth, Swanage was recently named as one of the best places to live in the South West by *The Sunday Times*. Offering an old-fashioned seaside charm, this town is your best bet for affordable family homes with sea views.

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ROTTINGDEAN, EAST SUSSEX - *average asking price £596,699*

Another highly popular spot for home buyers, Rottingdean combines a picturesque village with a beautiful beachfront and boasts a lively community. Explore a mix of Georgian town houses, Edwardian family homes and character cottages.

ST MAWES, CORNWALL - *average asking price £963,398*

For those with a larger budget, the small fishing village of St Mawes, near Falmouth, is the perfect coastal location. With more than five million searches on Rightmove in February, Cornwall has now overtaken London as the most searched for place for home buyers.

Popular for boating and yachting, if you want to do a bit of daydreaming, check out its selection of stunning sea-view mansions.

THORNHAM, NORFOLK - *average asking price £223,898*

A small coastal village situated in the Norfolk Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Thornham's attractive and traditionally styled properties make it a highly sought-after location for home buyers. Ideal for those looking for a more remote place to live; if you work from home, you won't find a more idyllic setting.





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VACCINES PUT A SPRING IN INVESTORS' STEP

The arrival of spring is generally a time of great optimism and this year, more than ever, we are all certainly in need of a fresh bout of positivity. Thankfully for investors, there do seem to be increasingly hopeful signs on the horizon, with a growing belief that we are now at least starting on the road to economic recovery.

REASONS TO BE CHEERFUL

The successful development and rapid rollout of COVID-19 vaccines has provided hope that we will soon be able to live with the virus. As well as protecting vaccinated individuals, there are encouraging signs that the immunisation programme will slow transmission in the community. This has raised hopes of a significant, vaccine-powered revival in economic activity later this year.

GLOBAL GROWTH REBOUND

This vaccine-fuelled optimism is reflected in recent economic forecasts, with the International Monetary Fund's latest projections suggesting the global economy is set to expand by 5.5 per cent in 2021. This represents an upward revision of 0.3 per cent compared to the organisation's previous forecast made last October. Vaccine-induced euphoria also saw equity funds enjoy a strong quarterly inflow during the final three months of last year.

NEGATIVE RATES?

A further boost to equity investments could stem from negative interest rates. Although it remains unclear whether such a policy will be introduced, in early February the Bank of England gave banks and building societies six months to prepare for such a possibility. If enacted, sub-zero rates would reduce the incentive to save in cash deposits and thereby potentially increase demand for shares, placing even greater emphasis on investment portfolios.

TIME FOR A SPRING CLEAN

While the economic outlook remains uncertain, there are positive signs for investors. This means that ensuring your investment portfolio is working hard for you is more important than ever. It could therefore be the perfect opportunity to review your portfolio and rebalance the allocation of asset classes, if necessary, to ensure your investments are well-diversified and performing in line with your long-term requirements and objectives.

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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QUIDS IN

How to make money back on your online purchases

While the three lockdowns we've endured since March 2020 may not have done much for our mental health, they have at least, as very small consolation, given new energy to consumerism. From shops and online retailers needing to find new ways to connect with a marketplace unable to act in the same way as before, to huge quantities of dormant pre-lockdown stock needing to be shifted, it's a good time to be on the lookout for deals.

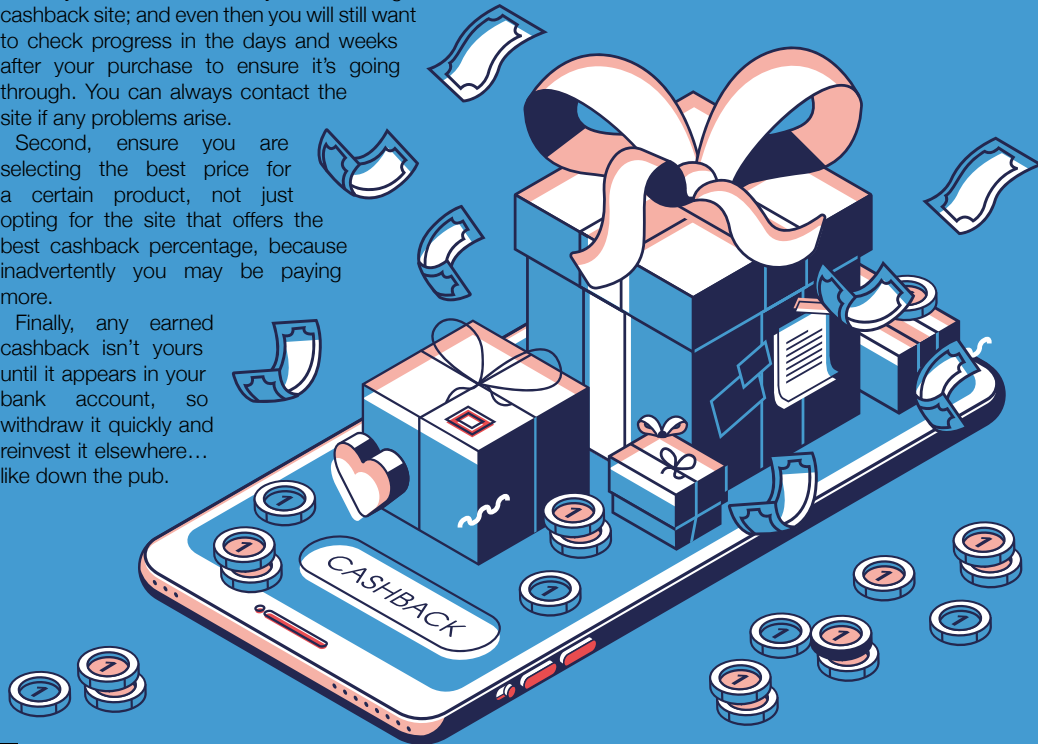
Sure enough, in a world that is more driven than ever towards consumerism, online tracking of purchases through cashback sites can provide an additional useful bonus to purchases – they might even determine which retailer you buy from in the first place.

Sites such as Quidco and TopCashBack advertise cashback offers from thousands of retailers. Simply follow the link to Nike, Next, New Look or whoever has a product you desire, and make a purchase, which will be tracked using cookies. You will have been given a percentage cashback level – usually between one and 10 per cent. A few weeks later, that cashback will appear on the platform, ready to be withdrawn into your bank account or converted into a gift card.

There are a couple of operational points worth noting. First, the tracking process isn't 100 per cent fail-safe – you must make sure you link through the cashback site; and even then you will still want to check progress in the days and weeks after your purchase to ensure it's going through. You can always contact the site if any problems arise.

Second, ensure you are selecting the best price for a certain product, not just opting for the site that offers the best cashback percentage, because inadvertently you may be paying more.

Finally, any earned cashback isn't yours until it appears in your bank account, so withdraw it quickly and reinvest it elsewhere... like down the pub.



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Q What Can Coverure Brentwood Help With?

A With our wide suite of insurance products, it'd be easier to list what we can't help you with! Whether it's insurance protection for your house, your business or even your van, we can help you find the cover you need for less.

Q Why Should You Use Coverure Brentwood?

A We pride ourselves on our exceptional customer service. No risk is the same and we'll take the time to truly understand your needs before recommending a product that's tailored to you. We have access to some of the UK's biggest and best insurers, meaning that you get the strong customer service of a local broker with the insurance policies of a national chain.

Q How Can Insurance Protect You?

A Depending on what kind of cover you're after, insurance can provide a safety net against a variety of risks you face on a daily business. Insurance can be the difference between your business running smoothly or going under. The difference between your delivery vehicle being off the road for months or days.



Q How Can You Save Money On Your Insurance?

A Whether combining multiple risks on to a single policy or simply looking at your cover levels, there's plenty of ways you could save money on your insurance. Why not get in touch with us and see if we can save you money?

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Hello hay, FAREWELL FEVER

As the weather gets warmer and the pollen count grows, hay fever sufferers across the nation lament. If you are already in the throes of a hay fever attack, you don't have to turn to over-the-counter medications. Instead, try one of the below natural remedies.

VITAMIN C

A natural antihistamine, vitamin C can be found in oranges, lemons and grapefruits, as well as red bell peppers. As vitamin C cannot be stored in the body, you need to offer consistent and low doses to support your nasal lining and minimise the effects of hay fever.

HONEY

If you know anyone who sells local honey, then this is the perfect hay fever remedy for you. With the ability to desensitise your body to other pollens, the bee pollen found in honey can help to significantly reduce the most common hay fever symptoms, including a runny nose and persistent sneezing.

GARLIC

Known for boosting your immune system, garlic can also act as a decongestant which can help to alleviate minor hay fever symptoms. This potent plant is also an anti-inflammatory and a good source of quercetin, a natural antihistamine.

PETROLEUM JELLY

Not just a lip saviour when the weather turns cold, petroleum jelly has been praised by hay fever sufferers for its ability to trap pollen before it enters the nose. Simply apply a thin layer inside your lower nostrils to prevent your symptoms from becoming any worse.

CHAMOMILE TEA

High in antioxidants, as well as being a natural antihistamine, chamomile tea can be drunk to act as an anti-inflammatory agent. Alternatively, choose to place cooled teabags on swollen, red eyes for an instant calming effect.

CHILLI PEPPERS

Chilli peppers contain capsaicin which, when eaten, opens up the nasal passages, helping to reduce congestion caused by hay fever.



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HAVE A brew-tiful DAY

Coffee lovers rejoice, your morning cuppa can not only help kickstart your day but it can also help your health in more ways than you can imagine.

ENHANCED LONGEVITY

Recent studies have found that coffee drinkers are less likely to die from some of the most leading causes of death, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes and kidney disease.

REDUCED RISK OF ALZHEIMER'S AND PARKINSON'S

Drinking two or three cups of coffee a day can reduce your risk of developing dementia and Parkinson's disease. Plus, for the latter, it can help you control your movements.

INCREASED FAT-BURNING ABILITIES

There is a reason why caffeine is found in nearly every fat-burning supplement, and this is because it has the ability to boost your metabolic rate by between three and 11 per cent and potentially increase fat-burning by up to 29 per cent.

IMPROVED PHYSICAL ABILITIES

Caffeine increases epinephrine, also known as adrenaline, in your body, which can help to improve physical performance by between 11 and 12 per cent.

DECREASED RISK OF DEPRESSION

The drinking of coffee is linked to positive emotions such as pleasure, satisfaction, calmness and happiness. In fact, a study by Harvard found that the risk of depression in

women decreased as their caffeinated coffee consumption increased.

WHAT IS THE COFFEE DIET?

Popularised by the book *The Coffee Lover's Diet* by Dr Bob Arnot, the coffee diet is based around the idea that health and longevity is enhanced by a high intake of antioxidant-rich coffee. The diet is said to help boost your metabolism, burn fat, block calorie absorption and decrease your appetite.

HOW IT WORKS

- Drink a minimum of three cups of light-roast coffee per day
- Avoid adding milk or sugar
- Replace one meal with a home-made, high-fibre, green smoothie
- Stick to 1,500 calories per day
- Avoid highly processed foods





REBUND REGRET

how to move on properly after a failed relationship

When a relationship comes to an end it can be a traumatic and sad experience, with statistics showing that most of us will experience the feeling at some point in our lives.

While time is undoubtedly the greatest healer, there are a few useful techniques and ideas that can let light come through on even the very darkest days of a relationship break-up:

1. Draw a line: It's easier said than done, but the thing that makes failed relationships so painful is the brain's desire to relive happier times. While assessing what went wrong is something you will probably need to do at some point, if you feel the relationship is beyond repair you should save the soul-searching for further down the track, instead looking to draw a line in the sand.

When you can tackle the ins and outs, avoid viewing history with rose-tinted glasses by writing a list of both

the bad and the good aspects of the relationship.

2. Sever ties: The temptation when a relationship goes bad is to attempt to stay in touch in the hope of repairing or, worse still, staying friends. Both can be tricky – things happen for a reason – and you may find yourself not just prolonging that yearning for your ex, but also holding back on meeting someone new.

3. Stay busy: Keeping the brain active and distracted is an important route towards moving forward. Look for new challenges or embark on a fresh project as a way of distracting the mind away from painful thoughts.

4. Focus on your own health: The dopamine buzz we receive from exercise is a great antidote to feelings of despondency that might arise out of a split. Exercise and other steps towards building health and strength will aid recovery as well as serving to focus on 'the you', which after a painful split is important and, undoubtedly, what you deserve.



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FASHION

REACH FOR Retro

Forget spending a fortune on a new wardrobe this season – simply dig into your cupboards and pull out some pieces that are back in fashion.

SUPER-STATEMENT TROUSERS

Ditch your skinny jeans and leggings, because this season it is all about the high-waisted, wide-legged trousers. A huge trend in the Eighties, this is the perfect style for anyone who likes to feel comfy in their clothes while also being fashion-forward.



ALL THAT GLITTERS

If you were a huge fan of disco, then you will be thrilled to know that glitter is back! From Louis Vuitton's stunning silver suits to Balmain's super slinky sparkle dresses, the catwalk will be lit up with glitzy, glittery glam.

TOP OF THE CROPS

Not for the faint-hearted, crop tops are making a huge comeback. Best matched with a loose blazer and high-waisted skirt or jeans – ideal if you love your tum, but not your hips! – this is the ultimate throwback look for when the heat rises.



POWER PUFF SLEEVES

You may have to reach right back into your wardrobe to find this look; the ultimate symbol of Eighties glam. That's right – puffy sleeves are back, and this time they mean business. Whether summery and voluminous or structured to create that classic silhouette, this is a big, bold trend that's here to stay.

SHEER LUCK

Incredibly versatile, this is a fantastic trend for almost every body shape. Whether you want to emulate Seventies beach chic with patterned maxi-dresses and a bikini peeking through, Nineties grunge with a see-through loose layer over a tight minidress and chunky boots, or simply a semi-sheer camisole under a blazer, this is a great way to reveal a little extra flesh while still remaining modest.



Photo credit: ASOS.com



BEAUTY

RICE, RICE baby

When you rinse rice before cooking, chances are you let the water simply run down the drain. However, you may think twice about wasting this leftover liquid when you discover its many beauty benefits below.

WHAT MAKES RICE WATER BENEFICIAL?

Rice water is packed with vitamins, minerals and amino acids which are all needed for maintaining healthy skin, hair and nails. It contains ferulic acid, an antioxidant that helps to nourish skin and nails, as well as allantoin that has healing properties. For your hair, rice water contains inositol, which strengthens your follicles and reduces surface friction.

BEAUTY USES FOR RICE WATER

Facial cleanser: Give your skin a boost of goodness by pouring rice water onto a cotton pad and massaging over your face, both in the morning and before bed.

Acne treatment: Apply to spots to help reduce redness to act as an astringent and to prevent future breakouts.

Age spot treatment: If you suffer with age spots or skin discolouration, mix 1 tsp of rice water with

two drops of fractionated coconut oil and massage into your face and neck.

Hair conditioner: For those with dry or brittle hair, apply rice water and a few drops of lavender essential oil after shampooing, leave for 10 minutes and rinse with cold water.

Nail treatment: To help your nails grow faster, soak them in a bowl of rice water for five minutes once a day. This can also help to reduce the signs of ageing on your hands.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR OWN RICE WATER

- > Rinse ½ cup of uncooked rice to remove any dirt or impurities
- > Place the rinsed rice in a bowl and cover it with two cups of water
- > Swirl and leave to soak for 30 minutes
- > Strain the rice and set aside the water
- > Store the rice water in an airtight container. It will keep for one week in the fridge.



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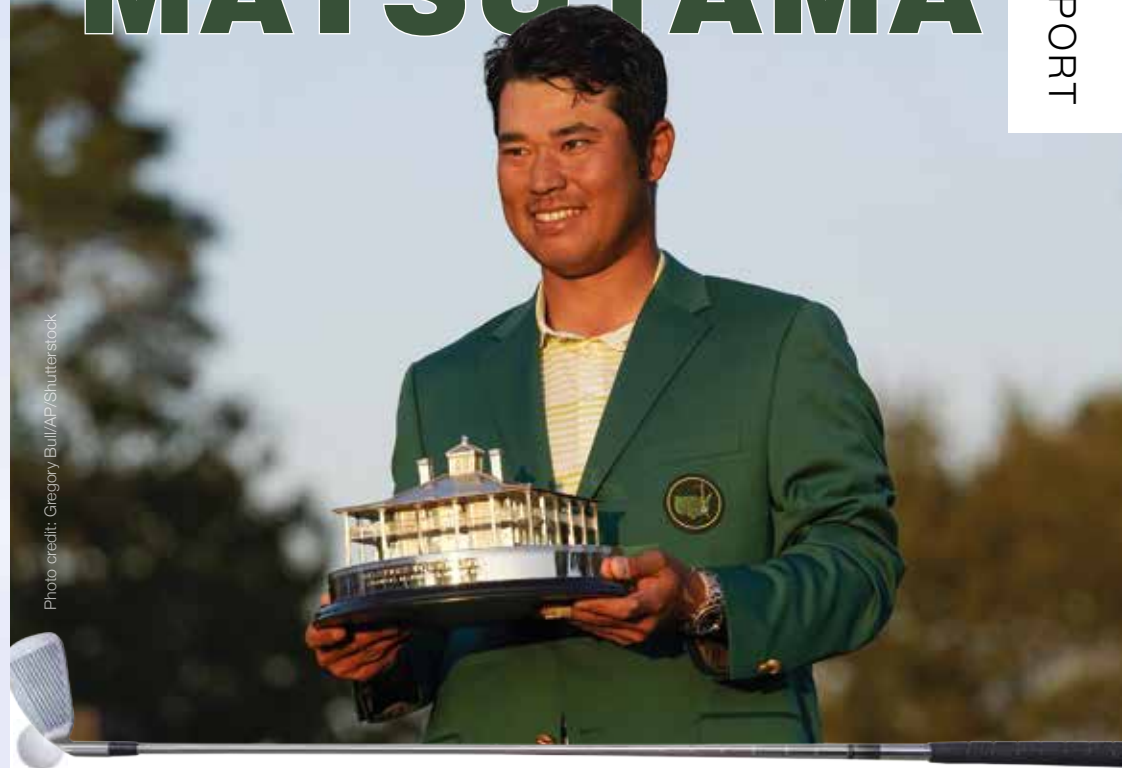
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SPORT

Photo credit: Gregory Bull/AP/Shutterstock



HOW A SHY JAPANESE GOLFER MADE HISTORY AT THE MASTERS

In all honesty, golfer Hideki Matsuyama probably isn't cut out for a life in the spotlight of the sporting world. The 2021 Masters champion, who originates from the place in Japan that gave him his name – Matsuyama is a city in the Ehime region on the island of Shikoku – claimed victory at the iconic Augusta course in April, finishing a shot clear of American youngster Will Zalatoris.

"I am relieved," he said afterwards. "It looked good coming into the final day – the course was playing well for me and I knew I just had to hold my nerve.

"It is the proudest moment of my sporting life."

Success hasn't come quickly or easily. Indeed, Matsuyama has had to wait four painful years to make amends for a catastrophic loss of confidence on the back nine of the 2017 PGA Championship when he seemed set to hit the title.

Recovering from hitting five bogeys in the final

trappings that cost him that victory has taken the 29-year-old time, and although he again wobbled on his way to finally setting the record straight as he posted an overall 10 under par, this time he held on to the clamours of delight emanating from his homeland.

Japan is a golf-mad country and finally it has a golfing champion to call its own; not just that but a man who values respect and humility. He bowed to the 18th fairway at Augusta as a mark of respect and, despite pocketing the \$2million first prize, still flew back to his homeland alone, on a standard flight. Indeed, perhaps the most iconic image of the whole weekend was Matsuyama sitting at Augusta airport on the Monday, dressed down, checking messages, and that famous green blazer casually draped over a neighbouring seat.

Japan has a champion to be proud of, as does the sport of golf.



SPORT



THERE'S NO BEATING BLACKMORE

How modest but magnificent jockey Rachael Blackmore made history

On April 10, Rachael Blackmore stood aloft Minella Times, triumphant in becoming the first female jockey to have ridden a horse to victory at the Grand National.

In 182 years of the world's most famous horse race, never before has a member of the fairer sex come home victorious, though in Blackmore, who hails from Killenaule in County Tipperary, there is a jockey of prolific character, determination and future potential.

Already 10 years on the circuit, having ridden her first winner as an amateur back in February 2011, she truly announced herself at Cheltenham in 2019 when she came home first on A Plus Tard in the Close Brothers Novices' Handicap Chase.

That year she also had her second taste of riding at Aintree and, with each passing iteration, enhanced a game plan that would help her take home the big prize.

"I think as a jockey you are always learning; and although the courses and the horses are different, every race for me has felt like a rehearsal for a big victory."

Cheltenham success this year on favourite Honeysuckle reaffirmed the jockey's status to perform when the pressure was on, though starting out at 11/1 at Aintree in the Grand National left plenty of room for doubt. Those who bet on her to bring home the greatest victory of her career needn't have worried – Blackmore rode an impeccable race as the eight-year-old horse came through in style, winning by six and a half lengths.

"It fell right for me on the day, and that's all you can ask as a jockey," she said with immaculate modesty. "I never at any point thought I had a divine right to win, and nor will I in future – I've always regarded myself as being in the right place at the right time; and I'll hopefully continue to be."

Photo credit: Steven Cargill/racingphotos.com/Shutterstock

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MOTORING



Buy or Lease?

The ins and outs of buying versus leasing, and which one you should choose

The trend in modern motoring, certainly where new cars are concerned, is to lease rather than buy. The advantages of leasing speak for themselves – you'll need to put down only a small amount of money upfront, your monthly payments can be configured according to the budget you set out at the start, and you have the option of upgrading the car every few years so you're always rocking about town in the latest model.

There's also the reassurance of knowing that if something goes wrong with the vehicle, you'll be covered by the manufacturer's warranty; and that fear of the unexpected, when you hear that horrible, grinding sound... well, it's someone else's problem!

You'll also find that road tax can be covered, and you may even get the vehicle delivered to your door.

The appeal of what is, in effect, borrowing a vehicle is at odds with the way we view other things in life. Home ownership, for instance, is taken as preferable over renting, yet owning a car outright is fraught with perils.

If you can afford the entire cost of a vehicle upfront you're immediately into the realms of depreciation

the moment you turn the key in the ignition – and of course any repair bills fall to you and you only.

That said, you won't have to subscribe to any mileage limitations, nor will you be dealing with broker fees. And while many pay for new cars through PCP (personal contract purchase) or HP (hire purchase) finance, you do have a potentially substantial asset ready to be cashed in when you decide you want to switch to another vehicle.

Buying over leasing very much comes down to personal circumstances – what's right for you will be wrong for someone else. As ever, do the maths and, more than anything else, drive safely!




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