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Editor's notes...

Hello and welcome to this month's edition of VISIONBrentwoodOngar.

We're into February now - that fateful month when New Year's resolutions begin to scurry away like a thief in the night, never to be seen again.

I admit that rarely does the start of a year go by without me promising to make either my own or someone else's life healthier or happier.

This year I didn't, even though I'll be the first to admit that my fitness levels have taken a dive after the buoyant festive period.

That's not to say I don't want to get back to a routine of regular exercise. I've already started, in fact. I'm on my bike every other day, am

walking more regularly to the office and have cut out those sneaky snacks.

The difference is that I want to get away from this being a New Year thing. I know so many people fall down on a resolution and believe the game is up. Not true! Not only should we take failure in life as just a temporary blip, but we should also be solid in the belief that good habits, new initiatives and a drive for self-improvement can and should happen at any time of the year.

My advice is therefore to do something good in 2023, but use the whole of 2023 to do it.

Mik Allen

This is your town's hyperlocal magazine, delivering to homes and businesses every month.

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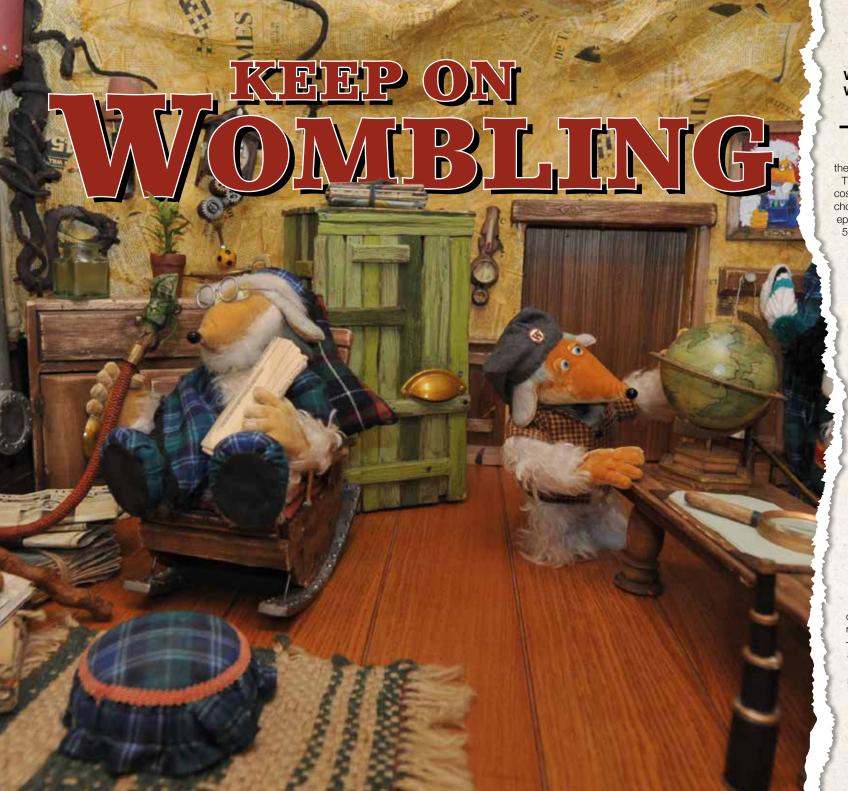
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WOMBLING FREE, THE WOMBLES OF WIMBLEDON COMMON ARE WE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MOW YOUR SMOW

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

WHAT'S SNOW MADE FROM?

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

HOW COLD DOES IT HAVE TO BE TO SNOW?

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

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SNOW. SLEET AND HAIL?

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

WHAT DO SNOWFLAKES LOOK LIKE?

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

Snow there you have it!





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

CHECK THE FIBRE CONTENT

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

UNDERSTAND THE LINGO

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

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

and absorbent.

LOOK AT THE TOWEL

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

CONSIDER THE WEIGHT

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

KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

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

HOME

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CELLAR DWELLER

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

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

MAN CAVE

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

UTILITY ROOM

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

HOME GYM

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

OFFICE

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

WINE CELLAR

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

HOME CINEMA

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





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and Smile HOME

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

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

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

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

Here are four ways to check your roof tiles are still

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

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

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

MOSS BROS

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

INSIDE OUT

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





5 STYLISH WAYS TO STORE

COOKBOO

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

LINE THEM UP AGAINST THE BACKSPLASH

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

ADD BUILT-IN SHELVES TO THE ISLAND

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

STORE THEM IN THE PANTRY

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

DISPLAY YOUR FAVOURITE WITH A BOOK HOLDER

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

INVEST IN A MULTI-TIER BASKET STAND

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



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Awesome décor, de!

t's time to get groovy with your home décor, as 70s style makes a humungous comeback. To many, it's the era that fashion forgot, but are we due a 70s revolution, five decades on?

Appliances that pop

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

Hey crochet

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

Rattan again

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

Velvet overground

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

Lino Ritchie

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

Don't teak

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





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values have been held dear for a the business some years ago Cloudy2Clear have remained true to their core values of supporting the local community by providing a service that saves the public money.

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BRENTWOOD PROPERTY NEWS



LOCAL MARKET ROUND UP



Over the last 12 months the average sales price in Brentwood was £462,363. The total value of sales was £375,186,877.

Transactions by price band over the last 12 months





BRENTWOOD

- €100k-£250k £250k-£500k £500k-£750k ● £750k-£1m €1m-£2m

less than £100k

£2m-£5m

House price growth over 1 year and 5 years



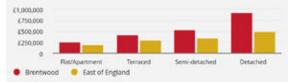


Top transaction in last 3 months

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SPURGATE

Average prices over last 12 months



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NATIONAL MARKET



FEBRUARY 2023

Bringing you the latest trends in the UK's housing market each month, with a detailed focus on our local market.

Annual property price growth has considerably softened according to the latest indices released by the Halifax and Nationwide, Prices remain substantially higher than two years ago. All indices now report small month-on-month falls.

Economy

Prices rises in the UK slowed for the second month in succession. Inflation fell to 10.5% in the year to December, from 10.7% in November. The drop was mainly due to easing fuel prices, food prices remain at a 40-year high.

Transactions

Over 107,000 sales took place in November, the busiest November, except for 2021, since 2007. Sales volumes September-November were up 3.3% on the previous 3-month period according to data from the HMRC.



LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood







Ctaff at a Brentwood-based animal shelter have Ospoken about how the cost-of-living crisis is forcing more people to rehome their pets.

Hopefield Animal Sanctuary, on Sawvers Hall Lane. told VISIONBrentwoodOngar it had received requests to rehome more than 1.300 animals in 2022 in the "worst year on record". Sadly, many had to be turned away as the sanctuary was "already running at almost

In a year of rising costs and extreme temperatures. a representative of the sanctuary said that the year had been "incredibly tough at times". The cold snap in December caused taps and pipes to freeze over, and staff worked round the clock to keep animals warm and comfortable.

A spokesperson for Hopefield Animal Sanctuary said: "We've seen a huge increase in our feed bills over the last year, and it doesn't look like that's going to change any time soon.

"We're receiving a lot of enquiries from people who are looking to rehome their much-loved pets owing to financial struggles, like not being able to afford their upkeep, or they need to downsize their property and their pets can't come with them.

"There's so many ways that people can support us, from donating to our winter hay and straw campaign, to setting up a monthly donation, sponsoring an animal for just £30 for a year, and even sharing our posts online to help raise awareness is a massive help."

To find out more about the sanctuary or to donate or sponsor an animal, visit hopefield.org.uk

To donate to its hay and straw campaign, please visit www.gofundme.com/f/winter-hay-straw-appeal-2022



Residents named in New Year Honours List



ABrentwood resident and an Ongar resident have been named in King Charles III's first New Year Honours List.

Professor Deborah Ann Sturdy OBE, from Brentwood, is the chief nurse for adult social care at the Department for Health and Social Care and was awarded a CBE for services to social care.

Andrea Sutcliffe, chief executive and registrar of the Nursing and Midwiferv Council. was "thrilled" to see Deborah on the list, adding: "Deborah has done so much to raise the profile of the brilliant nurses working in social care, celebrate their

contributions and ensure their voices are heard at a national level.

"This recognition is a testament to her tireless commitment to adult social care nursing."

Ongar resident Simon Moring, a detective superintendent for the Metropolitan Police, was awarded an MBE for services to health and wellbeing.

He said: "I am humbled to receive this award and hope that it highlights the importance of supporting officers and staff with both mental and physical difficulties.

"There is still much more to be done. I should like to thank the Met's Disability Staff Association, Mental Health Network and the Blue Light Champions."

Tree planting scheme to continue despite setback

Approximately 14,500 trees are to be planted in Brentwood parks in February and March, despite some areas seeing only a nine per cent survival rate for trees planted in 2020/21.

The tree planting project, funded by the Urban Tree Challenge Fund and the Trees for Climate Fund, seeks to deliver the government's manifesto pledge to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025.

Volunteers and contractors will plant trees in four

Brentwood parks: 10,000 at Hutton Country Park, 2,500 at St Faith's Country Park, and 1,000 each at Warley Country Park and Hatch Road Country Park.

Only 400 of the 4,500 saplings planted at St Faith's during the 2020/21 season survived. At a council meeting on December 19, councillors said environmental factors were the main cause.

A spokesperson for Brentwood Borough Council said: "Most of the loss is owing to the challenging drought conditions, with only some vandalism responsible, and this will be tackled with smaller planting schemes across the sites that will be easier to monitor and establish."

Infant school to cut admission to save money

↑ Brentwood school will save more than £75,000 Aafter permission was granted to reduce its Published Admissions Number (PAN) from 90 to 60 students.

The decision made by the St Helen's Catholic Infant School Academy adjudicator will enable the school to make savings of approximately £44,655 in teachers' salaries, £19,137 in learning support assistants' salaries and £8.125 in kitchen staff salaries, as well as around £4,000 in classroom resource and utility costs.

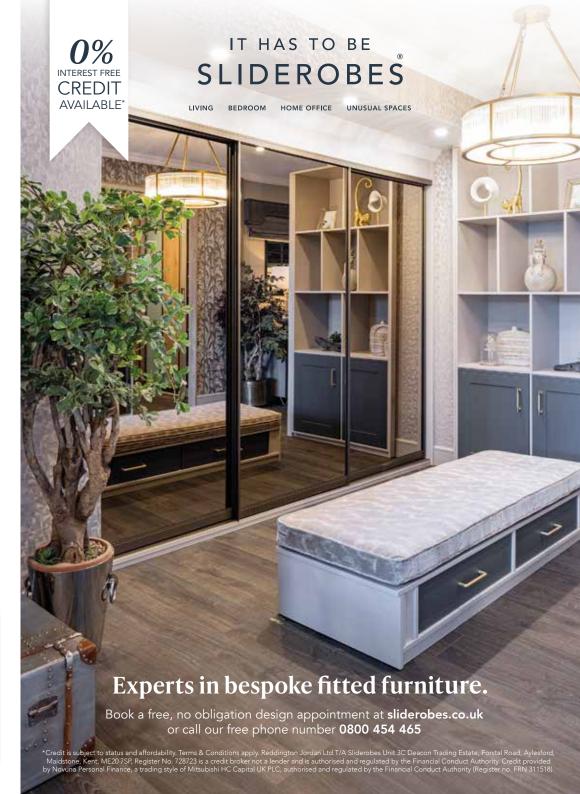
The school says it expects to be able to satisfy all first preferences for September 2023, and as the building has not been modified, it may be able to go over its PAN in exceptional circumstances.

Housing developments in Brentwood were expected to bring in a wave of new students and applications, but building delays, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic paused some developments and the expected growth has not occurred.

A spokesperson for the school said: "The reduction of the PAN will support the school during the temporary period of financial challenges and enable better planning for staff for future academic years with more certainty.

"This would reduce the deficit for 2023/24 significantly and enable us to provide high-quality teaching and reduce the risk of staff redundancies."







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Pupils named as champions at chess competition



Prentwood School recently celebrated a trio of victories, with three students earning prestigious accolades at the London Junior Chess Championships.

The event, which has been running for nearly 100 years, attracts the best young chess players from across the country to compete in games that can last more than four hours each.

Brentwood School chess captain and Year 10 pupil Nina Pert (pictured left) became the London girls' under 18 champion, while Year 8 pupil Max Pert (pictured centre) became the under 16 champion, and Year 8 pupil Jaden Omoruyi (pictured right) became the under 14 minor champion.

Year 8 pupils Yahya Ferdhaus and Anushka Kishore Kumar, Year 7 pupil Aryan Gohil and Year 5 pupil George Nanayakkara also competed at the event.

Brentwood School chess coach Robin Slade said: "It was great to see Brentwood School so well represented in this prestigious competition. Congratulations to everyone involved."

Council asks for feedback on **War Memorial improvements**

prentwood Borough Council is asking residents Dto give feedback on a proposed new scheme to improve the surroundings of the War Memorial in Middleton Hall Lane.

The proposal is to replace the old paving around the memorial with a large circular paving area. The post-Second World War Memorial, the VC Memorial and the 1914-18 commemoration benches will then be relocated to the edges of the plot. The First World War silhouette will also be repositioned within a bed of poppies or other suitable planting which will be maintained by the council.

Councillor Chris Hossack, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council, said: "The new proposals will ensure that the War Memorial remains central to our borough and accessible to all. We have a very large turnout

for our military events and more than 1,000 attending our annual Remembrance Day parade. The renovation plans would make much better use of the space on the site, allowing more people to gather there safely."

Residents have until Tuesday, February 28, to complete the questionnaire, which is available at www.brentwood.gov.uk/ consultations

For residents who would like to complete a paper copy of the questionnaire, please visit the council's reception in the Town Hall between 9am and 4pm Monday to Friday.

Snooker tournament returns for second vear

The Brentwood Centre is set to host the English Open event of the World Snooker Tour (WST) for the second time later this year.

As reported in VISIONBrentwoodOngar August 2022 edition, last year's event also took place in Brentwood. It proved to be a thrilling competition that saw four-time world champion Mark Selby (pictured below) take home the trophy.

Tickets are now on sale for the 2023 event, which takes place between October 2 and 8.

Though the competing players are yet to be announced, last year's event included such wellknown names as Ronnie O'Sullivan, Judd Trump, Neil Robertson and John Higgins.

WST chairman Steve Dawson said: "We are delighted to be heading back to Brentwood. It proved a fantastic location for the English Open last year, and we were thrilled to see the venue packed every day.

"Snooker has so much history in Essex and the county has produced some of the best players of all time. If the local fans continue to support this event, then Brentwood could become the long-term home of the English Open."

To find out more or to buy tickets, please visit www.wst.tv/tickets







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BURGHART for BRENTWOOD



Alex Burghart MP for Brentwood and Ongar

The Spread Eagle pub in Brentwood has undergone a £270.000 refurbishment in recent months, and I was pleased to be invited by the manager. Craig Newbury (pictured right), and his boss, Jon Dale from Punch Pubs and Co, to visit the premises to find out how the business is doing.

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

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

As with all businesses, the increase in energy costs



came just as all COVID-19 restrictions were lifted, and this has had a significant impact on business costs. It was very helpful to be able to hear from Jon and Craig about the outlook for the sector, how government support has helped it over the past few years, and the challenges it faces in the months ahead.

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

Council to host first jobs fair



rentwood Jobcentre (pictured left) and Brentwood Borough Council are hosting a jobs fair at The Nightingale Centre on Thursday, February 9.

The fair will run from 10am to 2pm and companies including Avon, Everyone Active, Oxfam and Prima Partners will be attending to tell jobseekers about available opportunities.

Councillor Chris Hossack, Leader of Brentwood Borough Council. said: "This is the first time we have held such an event and it is my hope that it will become a regular opportunity for companies in the borough and further afield to reach those who are seeking different forms of employment.

"There are a lot of positions vacant at the moment across various industries and this is an ideal opportunity for people to come along and have a chat to find something that suits their work-life balance."

To find out more, visit www.brentwood.gov.uk/brentwood-

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LOCAL NEWS

from your neighbourhood



'Manipulative sex abuser' is jailed for 27 years

Aman from Ongar has been jailed for 27 years after being found guilty of multiple sexual offences against children.

Kevin Smith, 57 (pictured left), of Kimpton Close, appeared at Chelmsford Crown Court on Thursday, January 12. He was found guilty of nine counts of rape against a child under 14 and four counts of indecent assault. He was jailed for 27 years and will also spend five years on licence after his release from prison.

This follows an investigation which was launched last year after victims came forward to report the historic sexual abuses.

Speaking after the sentencing, one victim said: "Kevin Smith abused me when I was just a vulnerable child. For years, I dealt with the trauma it gave me. I have spent years thinking that all men are dirt and

being angry about what I was put through.

"If I could shout from the rooftops and tell victims not to be afraid, I would. If I could sit in the room with someone who went through similar things to me, I would tell them that no one is going to blame them and I'd encourage them to take their power back.

"What happened has drained me, but I hope talking about it helps another victim just like me."

Another victim said: "I am sickened to now hear it wasn't just me that was a victim, and I just want to say a massive well done to those victims who found the strength and courage to go ahead with it all too.

"As for Kevin Smith, he is a very dangerous, manipulative child sex abuser who took advantage of very young vulnerable girls for his own sick gratification. He can no longer hurt anyone ever again."







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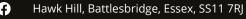
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Apologies issued for waste collection failings



pping Forest District Council (EFDC) and waste contractor Biffa have apologised for waste and recycling collection issues which have been affecting Ongar residents since before Christmas.

Leader of EFDC councillor Chris Whitbread and councillor Nigel Avey called a meeting with senior waste company executives on January 12 to address ongoing concerns.

Cllr Whitbread said: "Biffa has agreed a range of measures that residents should start to see as service improvements in the next few days and weeks."

Cllr Avey added: "Problems such as staff shortages and unreliable vehicles are being addressed.

"We are talking with other waste contractors. Biffa has agreed to make its material recycling facilities available to these contractors.

"We are working with Biffa to improve communications to handle customer complaints. Biffa will provide better live-time information so that when a collection is missed, residents will have a more realistic expectation as to when it will be collected."

Simon Crook, Biffa's operations director, said: "Unfortunately, there have been significant problems with the Epping Forest contract, but everyone at Biffa is 100 per cent committed to giving residents the service they deserve.

"There are many reasons for the missed collections, exacerbated by the recent snow and other matters beyond our control, including the national heavy goods vehicle driver shortage, but that does not make the inconvenience to residents any less.

"We'd like to apologise, and I want to reassure residents that we are doing all we can with EFDC to improve the situation as quickly as possible."

Man found guilty over knifepoint robbery

Aman has been found guilty following a knifepoint robbery at the Ongar home of Olympian Mark Cavendish MBE.

Romario Henry, 31, of Lewisham, was found guilty of

two counts of robbery at Chelmsford Crown Court on Monday, January 23. He will be sentenced on February 7.

The court was told how world champion cyclist Mr Cavendish and his wife Peta were in bed with their child on November 27, 2021, when up to three individuals attacked him. The individuals made off with two watches worth £700,000 in total, as well as high-end suitcases and telephones.

Oludewa Okorosobo, 28, of Camberwell, was found not guilty by the same jury.

Ali Sesay, 28, of Rainham, admitted two counts of robbery at an earlier hearing. He awaits sentencing.

In a statement, Peta and Mark said: "Although nothing can ever erase what our family went through, there is now some comfort that two men who broke into our family home and stole from us, assaulted Mark and terrified our children are now convicted."

Two men, Jo Jobson and George Goddard, are still wanted in connection with the investigation.

Classic vehicles to feature in upcoming railway events

ocal residents can look forward to three days of events run by Epping Ongar Railway this month.

On Wednesday, February 15, children will be able to experience everything Epping Ongar Railway has to offer for just £1, including riding the steam and diesel trains.

Then, on Saturday, February 18, and Sunday, February 19, additional bus routes will be in operation, featuring a variety of classic London Transport vehicles.

Also on Sunday, an evening photographic road run will take place from 3.30pm onwards, with buses taking passengers from North Weald Station to Epping Station.

For more information, visit www.eorailway.co.uk





PUZZLES & TRIVIA

ACROSS

- 1. Mexican cloak (6)
- 7. Swamping (8)
- 8. Belgian town (3)
- 9. Of the immediate past (6)
- 10. Place with temporary accommodation (4)
- 11. Standards (5)
- 13. Sharply (7)
- 15. Give up (7)
- 17. Draw or bring out (5)
- 21. Percussion instrument (4)
- 22. Popular round fruits (6)
- 23. Annoy (3)
- 24. Non-functioning period (8)
- 25. Thin candles (6)

DOWN

- 1. Points (anag) (6)
- 2. Closer (6)
- 3. Proposal; suggestion (5)
- 4. Act of touching (7)
- 5. Taught (8)
- 6. Hard tooth coating (6)

► Valentine's Day was first declared a holiday

by a pope. In 496 AD, Pope Gelasius I

made the feast of Saint Valentine an official

▶The first known official celebration of Saint

►Each year, 10 per cent of all marriage

► Around 25 million Valentine's cards are

►UK pet owners will spend £200million on

Valentine's Day is the second biggest 'event' of the year following Christmas, It

is estimated that the UK will spend around

proposals happen on February 14.

Valentine's gifts for their animals.

£880million on Valentine's Day.

sent in the UK every year.

Valentine's Day took place in Paris on

12. Memorial (8)

DID YOU KNOW?

holiday.

February 14, 1400.

- 14. Pertaining to plants (7)
- 16. Subatomic particle such as a nucleon (6)
- 19. Calls forth (6)
- 20. Surprise result (5)

18. Bearlike (6)

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

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

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

Hamsters need a good-quality, balanced diet that contains all the essential nutrients and minerals. They

can get this from a compound pellet ration, a mixture of seeds and small quantities of greens, clean root vegetables and fruits.

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

HOW TO KEEP YOUR HAMSTER HAPPY AND HEALTHY

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

HAMSTER FACT FILE:

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



APPY DAYS

ille our reliance on technology becomes greater every year, so too does our interaction with the world around us. For all the criticism levelled at them, our communications devices and, specifically, the apps on them, have offered us a far greater understanding of the world.

With that in mind, here are five apps that offer you the chance to broaden your horizons in 2023.

BACKDROP

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

© CENTER STAGE

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

MOTTERNAL LIFE

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

Go back to basics with this app that aims to help readers revisit the simple pleasures of storvtelling.

Rather than elaborate videos, films or animations, Yarn offers app users a simple choice of stories presented in text message form. Episodes and conversations are updated daily, and you can enjoy stories from several categories, including mystery, romance, comedy, sci-fi, fantasy, and more.

M NOISLI

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



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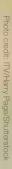




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GARDENING here's nothing that feels more like summer than the blooming buds and luscious lawns of a flower show, and in the UK we're treated to an incredible array of events that cater for every type of green-fingered enthusiast.

Harrogate Flower Show: April 20-23

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

Chelsea Flower Show: May 23-27

A royal favourite, the Chelsea Flower Show

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

Hampton Court Palace Garden Festival:

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

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

Tatton Park Flower Show: July 19-23

If you fancy venturing up north, head to Knutsford in Cheshire for a flower show that is much more a



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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

annual painting or waking up to fallen panels! We are very pleased with our new fence. add even more beauty to your Spring Mr & Mrs Green, Sandy For a free, no-obligation quote, find out more via:



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5 BENEFITS OF CO-WORKING

o you want to foster a flexible and collaborative company culture? Make networking a breeze and promote innovation? If yes, then you need to know all about co-working spaces and how they can revolutionise your business.

And if you're wondering what co-working is, it simply means that staff from different companies share the same office space.

INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY

What business doesn't want to see an increase in productivity levels? The beauty of co-working spaces is that they are optimised for productivity and are designed to adapt to different working styles. They are also ideal for remote workers who want to get away from the distractions of home.

NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES

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

FLEXIBLE WORKING

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

MORE COST-EFFECTIVE

When you rent a co-working space, you only have to pay for the areas that you plan to use. Furthermore, some co-working offices come with additional perks

such as on-site cleaning staff and printing services at no additional cost. Coworking spaces are also great for small businesses that want to grow without the pressure of committing to a long-term lease.



and shared offices, with traditional cubicles replaced with bright and colourful meeting rooms that encourage maximum creativity, hot desks and expansive lounge areas.

Co-working spaces offer private

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Are you looking for an ECO HOME?

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

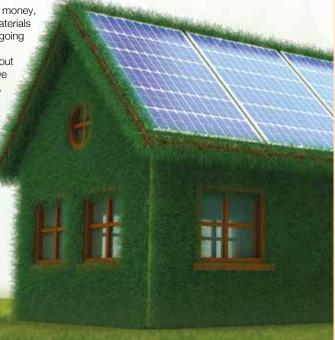
Je live in an era of eco sustainability in our homes, yet is eco design all it's cracked up to be, and do the negatives balance the positives for conscious consumers looking to create a home that has environmental excellence at its heart? Here, we look at the pros and cons of green homes.

PROS OF ECO HOMES

- > Cost: The trend for going green with our homes is supported wholeheartedly by local government. That means grants, subsidies and initiatives will bring certain costs down. If your structure benefits from elements such as rainwater harvesting and solar panels, your running costs will undoubtedly be lower than for a standard home.
- >The planet: Prioritising the homes in which we live can also help us feel as though we are playing a part in the bigger picture. After all, the commitments we make now are setting up the next generation for a better life.
- > Regulations: Future-proofing our homes for rules and regulations that may come about in the years ahead means we are investing now rather than paying further down the line.

CONS OF ECO HOMES

- > Cost: While green initiatives can save us money. the sourcing of some eco-friendly materials comes at a higher upfront cost. After all, going green is very rarely the cheapest option.
- > Longevity: While we know a lot about standardised building materials that have helped us map out huge communities, some of the newer green fabrication technologies are untested over the long term. Without the benefit of longevity testing, they may be more liable to having to be replaced or repaired as time goes on.
- > Ratio: While every environmental action makes a difference, the cost of investing in our homes may be at the expense of green initiatives we can undertake elsewhere (like buying an electric car) that would make a greater overall impact.



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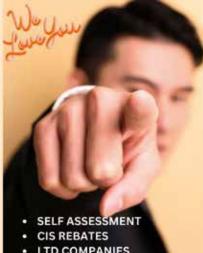




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Self-employed businesses and landlords with annual business or property income above £10,000 will need to follow the rules for Making Tax Digital for Income Tax from 6 April 2026. Some businesses and agents are already keeping digital records and providing updates to HMRC as part of a live pilot to test and develop the Making Tax Digital service for Income Tax. If you are a self-employed business or landlord you can voluntarily use software to keep business records digitally and send Income Tax updates to HMRC instead of filing a Self Assessment tax return.



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TAKE CONTROL NOW TO BEAT THE TAX CHILL

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

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

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

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

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

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

At HCR, we take the time to understand our clients' unique planning needs and circumstances, so that we can provide you with the most suitable solutions in the most cost-effective way. For a free review of your current financial situation, please contact Karyn Vogel on 01277 654153.



HERO

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

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

1. Reduce water loss

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

2. Manage skin disorders

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

3. Prevent skin infections

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

4. Protect the skin from allergens and irritants

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

TOP TIPS FOR USING A HUMIDIFIER

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

BEST HUMIDIFIERS 2023

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















scarf is a winter wardrobe staple for most people, but it can often be seen as more functional than fashionable.

Discover six super stylish ways to tie a scarf that guarantee to impress, with options for men and women.

1 The Beautiful Braid

- > Fold the scarf in half and place it around your neck.
- > Take the loose ends of the scarf and pull them loosely through the loop.
- > Twist the loop and pull the loose ends through again.
- > Continue to twist the loop with one hand, pulling the ends through until you run out of scarf.

2. The Belted Drape

- > Drape the scarf evenly around your neck and let it hang
- > Fasten a skinny belt over the scarf at the waist.

3. The Knotted Necklace

- > Take a lightweight scarf and place it around the back of
- > Tie a knot on one side and then on the other.
- > Pick up the loose ends and tie them together.
- > Turn the scarf around so that the ends are at the back and the knots are at the front.

4. The Carefree Cowl

- > Place the scarf around your neck so that one end is much shorter than the other.
- > Wrap the long end around your neck twice and tuck in the loose ends.
- > If your scarf has a fringe, adjust it so that a bit of fringing is hanging down the front.

5. The Double Bandana

- > Fold a long scarf in half lengthwise.
- > Grab the diagonal ends and knot them together.
- > Place it over your neck, twist and loop again.

6. The Casual Turtleneck

- > Place the scarf evenly around your neck.
- > Loop one end of the scarf around your neck.
- > Repeat with the other end (the ends should be hanging slightly down your chest).
- > Tuck the loose ends up inside the scarf.



The Travel Boutique

Always at the heart of your travel plans...

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

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



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

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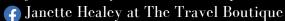






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BRACE

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

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

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

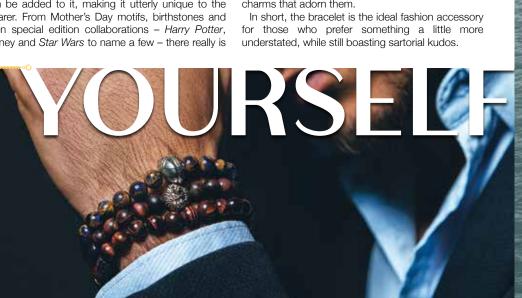
Making the ideal gift for any woman in your life, the bracelet's genius lies not in its simple and stylish design, but in the hundreds of different charms that can be added to it, making it utterly unique to the wearer. From Mother's Day motifs, birthstones and even special edition collaborations - Harry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

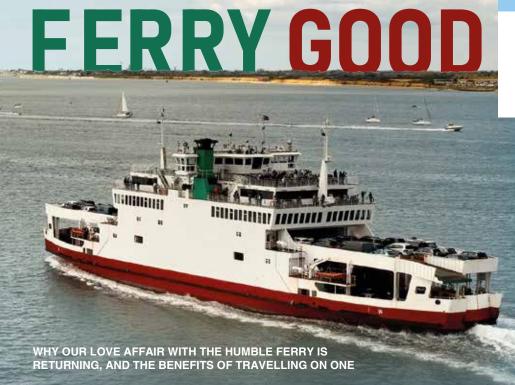
a charm for every occasion.

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

Even the humble friendship bracelet has had a charms that adorn them.

makeover in recent times, with jewellers such as Oliver Bonas and Monica Vinader creating woven cord bands that almost look homemade, were it not for the solid gold beading or diamond-studded





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

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

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

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

true if there are multiple people in one car.

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

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

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

In (almost) all weathers, your trusty ferry will keep going, and with providers having invested hundreds of millions of pounds in new fleets, ferries have also never been safer.



From your initial enquiry our team of travel experts will tailormake your trip to meet your personal requirements. From beach holidays, family holidays, city breaks and more, anytime of the year, we will help find you the perfect getaway.

Mother's Day Afternoon Tea From £360 Per Person Departs 19th March 2023

Make Mother's Day extra special with a luxurious Afternoon Tea aboard the British Pullman train with Belmond.

The price includes the round-trip journey from London Victoria to Surrey aboard the British Pullman Luxury Train, Relax in sumptuous Art-Deco surroundings as you enjoy a Great British Afternoon Tea including sandwiches, savouries, cakes, pastries and scones, plus half a bottle of Champagne per person. Coffee, tea and petits fours.



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City Break to Amsterdam with Eurostar From £455 Per Person Departs 5th May 2023

Surprise a loved one with a Spring break by Eurostar to Amsterdam

The price includes return Eurostar from London St Pancras and B&B accommodation at Hotel Botel, a 3-star hotel with rooms on board a boat on the II Canal on the



NDSM wharf in the Amsterdam North area. The former shipyard is now a modern lifestyle hub renowned for its restaurants, bars, festivals and flea markets. Just 250 metres from the hotel is a free 10-minute ferry service into the heart of Amsterdam's city centre and famous attractions including magnificent museums.

Magical Lapland Day Experience From £1,999 (Family of Four) Departs 12th December 2023 (Various Departure Airports Available)

Treat your family to a magical meeting with Santa in his Lapland home.

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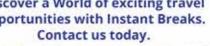




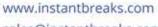






















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HOW TO KNOW WHEN YOUR BABY IS TEETHING AND USEFUL TRICKS TO HELP THEM

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

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

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

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

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

HELP

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

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

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





EXPLORE THE EXCITING FLAVOURS OF THAILAND

ON YOUR HIGH STREET

Nestled on the high street of Brentwood lies the exotic flavours of Giggling Squid, where husband and wife cofounders, Pranee and Andy, promise to bring the buzz of Thai mealtimes to the UK.

With plentiful dishes, bold flavours, exotic ingredients and a new extensive vegan menu, Giggling Squid definitely caters for all tastes and dietary requirements.

When you enter the simple but beautifully designed interior, you are hit with an air of elegance with the flower displays and wooden features something to admire.

Along with an array of main dishes, Giggling Squid also features tapas sets perfect for a lunch option or for sharing at the table. Their drinks menu offers all the classic cocktails with a Thai twist along with wine and spirits.

The dedicated Vegan menu offers all the favourites without compromising on flavour, including the much loved Massaman curry, Pad Thai and the Chilli and Basil Gra Pao.

To top off the energetic and informal setting and food. the staff are welcoming, attentive and knowledgeable about the dishes on offer.

If you are looking for a relaxing meal with friends, where you can enjoy sharing plates or big dishes, why not head to your local Giggling Squid, where you can sample the exotic flavours of Thailand, sit back and enjoy the atmosphere with a Thai inspired cocktail.









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How to make a warming BEAN & TOMATO SOUP

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

BEAN AND TOMATO SOUP (Serves 4-6 people) You will need:

2 tbsp olive oil 1 clove of garlic (minced) 1/2 tsp dried oregano 1/2 tsp dried thyme 1/2 tsp fresh chopped rosemary 1/4 tsp chilli flakes | Heaped tbsp tomato purée 1 tsp brown sugar 400g tin of finely chopped tomatoes or sieved tomatoes (passata) 500ml vegetable stock | 400g tin butter beans | Salt and pepper | Chopped parsley to decorate

How to make:

- > Heat the olive oil in a large saucepan.
 - > Add the garlic, oregano, thyme, rosemary and chilli flakes, and cook gently till the
 - Minument !! > Add the tomato purée and sugar, and cook over a medium heat for 3-4
 - > Pour in the tomatoes and stock and give it a stir.
 - > In a blender, purée the beans with the liquid from the can till the mixture is completely smooth (if it seems very thick, add
 - a tablespoon or two of water).
 - Pour the bean purée into the tomato mixture, and stir well.
 - > Bring the mixture to a boil, then simmer for about 20 minutes, stirring occasionally.
 - > Add salt and pepper to taste, pour into bowls, sprinkle with parsley, and enjoy.

Health benefits of pulses:

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

natural alternatives to toothposte

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

Essential oils

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

Baking sodar

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

Coconut oil-

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

Sea salt

Salt is antibacterial, making it a good choice for removing bacteria, plus it has the ability to naturally whiten your teeth. As with baking soda, dip your brush in sea salt and then

clean your teeth gently to avoid abrasion. Alternatively, mix with water to create a chemical-free mouthwash that can help to prevent gum disease and soothe toothache.

Turmeric

Although this bright yellow spice may not seem like the best solution for achieving

shiny white teeth, it is actually highly beneficial for your oral health due to its anti-inflammatory, anti-bacterial and anti-plaque properties. Create your own DIY turmeric toothpaste by mixing 1/4 tsp of turmeric powder with just enough mustard oil to make a paste. Brush and then rinse thoroughly.

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Introducing our impressive new Care Home Development

Dudbrook House





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

Sean Watson (Director St Michaels Homes Ltd)

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

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

A family run business, St Michaels Homes Ltd was established by Managing Director Sheila Watson in



1991. Sheila trained as a registered nurse and midwife, followed by 25 years in midwifery, followed by five years as a health advisor to the elderly, and obtained a diploma in gerontology. With this experience care of residents comes from the

top down, this can be seen by the way the residents are cared for by staff and quality inspections. The company is now being operated by Sheila's children Sean & Claire Watson who are fully hands on with the successful running of its care homes and new build development. St Michaels Homes also operates another home next to this new development called Howard Lodge, which was also renewed in 2014 and is within walking distance of Dudbrook Hall, Howard Lodge has been rated by CQC as Outstanding, so it now matches its facilities with its exceptional care.





Howard Lodge Care Centre, Beacon Hill Rd, Kelvedon Common, Brentwood, Essex CM14 5FO

Dudbrook Hall Care Centre

Dudbrook Road, Kelvedon Common, Brentwood. Essex CM14 5TO

Telephone 01277 372 095 enquiries@stmichaelshomesltd.com www.stmichaelshomesltd.com



Sean Watson, Director at St Michaels Homes Ltd said: "Due to reputation in the local and wider the extensive three acre grounds we community for providing quality have around our care homes, these care and are proud to be a family works will not affect the day to day run business. The A star care running of the existing home. Our provided by our staff will now be commitment of care to our residents matched by A-star facilities with the is our utmost priority and we are completion of the new home which very excited about the plans for this will increase the much required bed impressive new care home.

We have a well-established capacity offered from the old home CELEBRATING 1991-2022

from 44 to 64. Dudbrook House will bring unrivalled facilities including spacious rooms - all with en-suite, as well as hairdressers, sun terrace, balconies, private patios, activities and training facilities, day care centre, coffee lounge for residents with dining and living rooms on each floor along with landscaped gardens and a dementia garden.

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

"Delivering Quality Elderly & Dementia Care"





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WHATEVER HAPPENED TO THE FOOTBALL POOLS?

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

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

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

was illegal.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

While 'Bully Boy', from St Helens, is excelling in what is a modern, showbiz era of professional darts - with packed arenas, primetime TV billing and

a semi-celebrity status for the game's major stars - Smith epitomises something reassuringly old school about the sport. He is a 'larger' man, is adorned with tattoos, and

> reassuringly doesn't possess any of the media training associated with those in other sports.

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

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

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