

IN BRIEF

Bank holiday burglaries

WITHAM: Burglars targeted two homes in Stevens Road on Bank Holiday Monday.

They tried to smash into one house with a spade taken from the garden shed between midday and 2pm. Their efforts caused £2,000 worth of damage but they did not gain access.

At the second house thieves smashed glass in a back door to break in. They caused £100 worth of damage and made off with jewellery and electrical equipment worth £500. ■ Any witnesses should call Braintree CID on 0300 333 4444.

Bin men abused

WITHAM: Police have appealed for witnesses after a man verbally abused three refuse collectors.

The incident took place near New Rickstones Academy in Rickstones Road at 8.40am on Friday, May 28.

The man drove a silver Ford, was white, 6ft 2ins, with black hair, wearing a grey suit and sunglasses. ■ Call PC Holliman on 0300 3334444.

Carnival help

WITHAM: The carnival association needs an extra person with a vehicle with a tow hitch who is willing to help tow the carnival float to some local carnivals. Call 01376 515291.

'Krypton Factor' comes to village

Emma's assault course targets latest fitness boom

By Jenny Grant

jenny.grant@essexchronicle.co.uk

TOUGH training has come to a field near Rayne.

Complete with camouflaged scramble tunnels, monkey bars and a rope-swing across a muddy ditch, a military-style assault course is attracting those who are increasingly looking to the outdoors for a more extreme fitness experience.

The fittingly named Bootcamp Revolution was launched last month and had 500 enquiries in its first three weeks.

Its founder, personal trainer Emma Wright-Watts, from Braintree, said: "Watching trends in the fitness industry, I saw this real shift to people coming outside to get their exercise, and I wanted to do something a bit different."

Designed with the help of two friends from the Army and RAF, work began on the course in October.

With bookings for sports teams, corporate team-building events, and even a hen party, the assault course is proving popular.

Amazing

"The interest we have had has been amazing," said Emma, a mum-of-three.

"We push people hard and we will get the best out of you, but we don't shout.

"At the end of it people are shattered, but the course can be as hard as you make it."

Those up for the challenge can begin their workout with a run from Rayne station, exactly a mile away along the Flitch Way.

There are 14 pieces of apparatus on the course, with more planned. Emma, 35, also intends to launch a summer house for yoga and pilates, and build a shower and toilet block on the site off Mill Lane.

"It's the Krypton Factor meets Rayne," said Julie Ribbans, 36, as she faced the course for the first time.

"I have got two kids and I want to lose a little bit of weight. I live in Rayne so it is quite handy because there is nothing like this around here.

"It is completely different to the gym, it's outside, you get a bit of fresh air and it really gets your adrenalin going."

The course was also a hit with Mark Seaborn, 45, a coach at Great Notley Football Club.

He said: "At this time of year you want to be doing this type of thing in the fresh air, plus there is a run over here so you get your cardiovascular workout too.

"I think it's very challenging and the teamwork part makes it much more enjoyable."



TOUGH TEST: Personal trainer Emma Wright-Watts on her assault course E19JP4036



SWING TIME: Emma Wright-Watts watches Julie Ribbans cross a ditch



SPRINT FINISH: Jamie Andrews and Emma Wright-Watts

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Family bring toys back to town

A MOTHER and daughter team are gearing up to open an independent toy shop in Braintree.

Lorraine Chapman, 54, who worked at the town's Woolworths store for 15 years, has joined her toy expertise with the business acumen of daughter Niki McQuillan, who has given up running her own packaging business to run the venture.

Kidzone Toys will open for business on Saturday, June 5 in the former Blu Orange shop in Market Street.

"The town really doesn't have a lot," said Niki, 34, a mum-of-two from Bridport Way.

"Especially being a mum, there is nowhere to get toys any more.

"So we just decided to take the plunge.

"The town lacks so much and I think it's going to be down to us independent retailers to turn that around."



PLAY TIME: Lorraine and Niki McQuillan at their new shop E13J03024

Learn skills in conservation

OWNERS of historic homes can learn how to care for and maintain their houses with a series of specialist courses in the Braintree area.

Upcoming courses from the Essex County Council's Built Environment team include wattle and daub on June 10 and 11 in Great Saling, which is aimed at people wanting to broaden their skills in conservation and repair; and lime mortar and conservation brickwork in Braintree on July 1 and 2, which will give bricklayers experience in conservation techniques.

With the recent trend in DIY restoration and home makeover, the courses are also ideal for people who want to furnish themselves with some specialist renovation skills.

■ For details or to book courses, e-mail traditional.buildingskills@essex.gov.uk