

stop press:



Urban village: St Mary's boasts a church fête, above, a cricket club, a grammar school – and a 31 per cent house price hike

London's big success story

THE little-known village of St Mary's in Bexley, south-east London, emerges today as the capital's property success story of 2015.

Mentioned in the Domesday Book, the village – part of Old Bexley – topped a chart for house price growth in London over the year, according to Savills.

St Mary's, which sits on the edge of the capital's green belt, saw prices leap by 31 per cent to an average of £423,383, leading the field among 20 locations in London that saw prices grow by at least 20 per cent.

Bexley was one of the capital's best-performing boroughs, along with Hillingdon, Enfield, Newham, Greenwich and Barking &

Dagenham – all of which saw prices borough-wide grow by 12 to 13 per cent.

Along with St Mary's, other top-performing districts within boroughs were Valence Park in Becontree, Barking & Dagenham, and East Ham Central in Newham, both of which recorded 28 per cent growth.

St Mary's is a classic urban village with a pretty Norman church and a vibrant high street, but very few new-build homes, creating a shortage of supply and inflated prices, according to local agents.

Its sought-after period houses, open spaces, good transport links and a local grammar school rated "outstanding" have also tempted families from central London.

Find Ruth Bloomfield's full story and see the top-performing districts across London at homesandproperty.co.uk

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Lifechanger of the week a charming rural gem with money-making opportunity



£799,950: in the sought-after rural hamlet of Raven's Green, Essex, set down a private lane, sits this charming, whitewashed house with a lovely garden and an acre of paddocks.

It comes with a separate one-bedroom cottage in the garden that would be perfect for holiday letting, as well as a summerhouse and a separate home office,

ideal for running a thriving little business.

In the main house, there are open fires and wooden beams, plus four bedrooms, three modern bathrooms and a big kitchen with a range cooker and dining area, so perhaps B&B guests could be catered for, too. Great Bentley station is within easy reach.

Through Fenn Wright (01206 916074).

By Faye Greenslade



Trophy buy of the week your private spa lies deep beneath the bright lights

£2.85 million: not everyone who lives in a cave considers their life a failure. And, anyway, this is just the stone-clad vaulted underground spa of a fancy duplex apartment off Fitzroy Square, close to the hotspots of the West End.

If you can drag yourself away from the steam room, whirlpool bath, rain

shower and private cinema, upstairs is kitted out with high-specification touch-pad gadgetry galore, controlling audio, lighting, heating, security and video entry, plus a glamorously glossy all-white kitchen/diner, two bedrooms, two bathrooms and a private patio. Through Hudsons (020 8012 1175).

London buy of the week gorgeous garden apartment in a gift of a location

£700,000: this generous garden flat in Shepherd's Bush would be the perfect buy this Christmas.

Extended from the back of a traditional Victorian property, the flat has its own entrance and a smart open-plan kitchen/dining and reception room with skylights, and bi-folding doors opening on to a private decked patio and lawn. Two good bedrooms –



one with a glass door opening on to a patio, the other with a bay window – complete the deal. Its prime W12

location is perfect for shopping, restaurants and the Tube. Through Faron Sutaria (020 8012 1755).

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Make your Christmas sparkle

DON'T miss our guide to adding those finishing touches in your home that make the most of Christmas. Fill your rooms with the spicy scents of cinnamon, frankincense and sandalwood as you cosy up in the gentle glow of a luxurious selection of tried-and-tested fragranced candles.

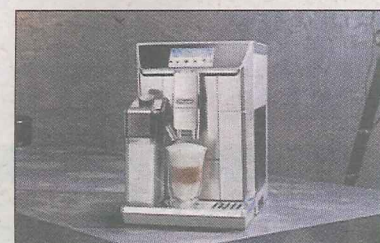
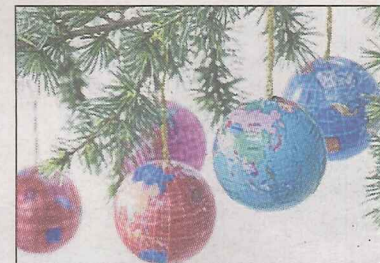
We'll show you how to add dazzle to your Christmas tree with crafted silver, copper and blown-glass baubles, and inspire you with our last-minute gift guide – from elegant



A magical time: enjoy a glittering Christmas with decorations and gifts of silver, copper and blown glass – and aromas of frankincense, cinnamon... and fresh coffee

champagne flutes to presents for budding Bake Off contestants, and even something for a much-loved pet.

Find it all at:
homesandproperty.co.uk/christmas
and have a wonderful time.



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