

Stuart Bingham

Stuart Bingham is our lad from Vange, a professional snooker player, former world champion and the reigning Masters champion! But things didn't start too promising for Stuart when he was growing up in Basildon, earning a quick buck as a table cleaner at local snooker clubs. One day he was messing about on a rooftop and he fell off, breaking both his arms! Ouch! Safe to say it's not easy to play snooker with two broken arms. Still, that didn't stop him from making his way as a professional sportsman. In fact, he was even a decent golfer as a young man before giving it up to dedicate himself to snooker.

Good thing he did, as over the years Stuart has made a habit of upsetting the odds and surprising people. When he was an unknown 24 year old he shocked the snooker world by defeating the normally undefeatable Stephen Hendry 10-7 in the first round of the snooker world championships. For many years people thought that would be the highlight of his career, but that Basildon battling spirit kept coming through. In 2015 aged 38 he became the oldest first-time snooker world champion in history, in what some people called "an astonishing transition from journeyman to king of the Crucible".

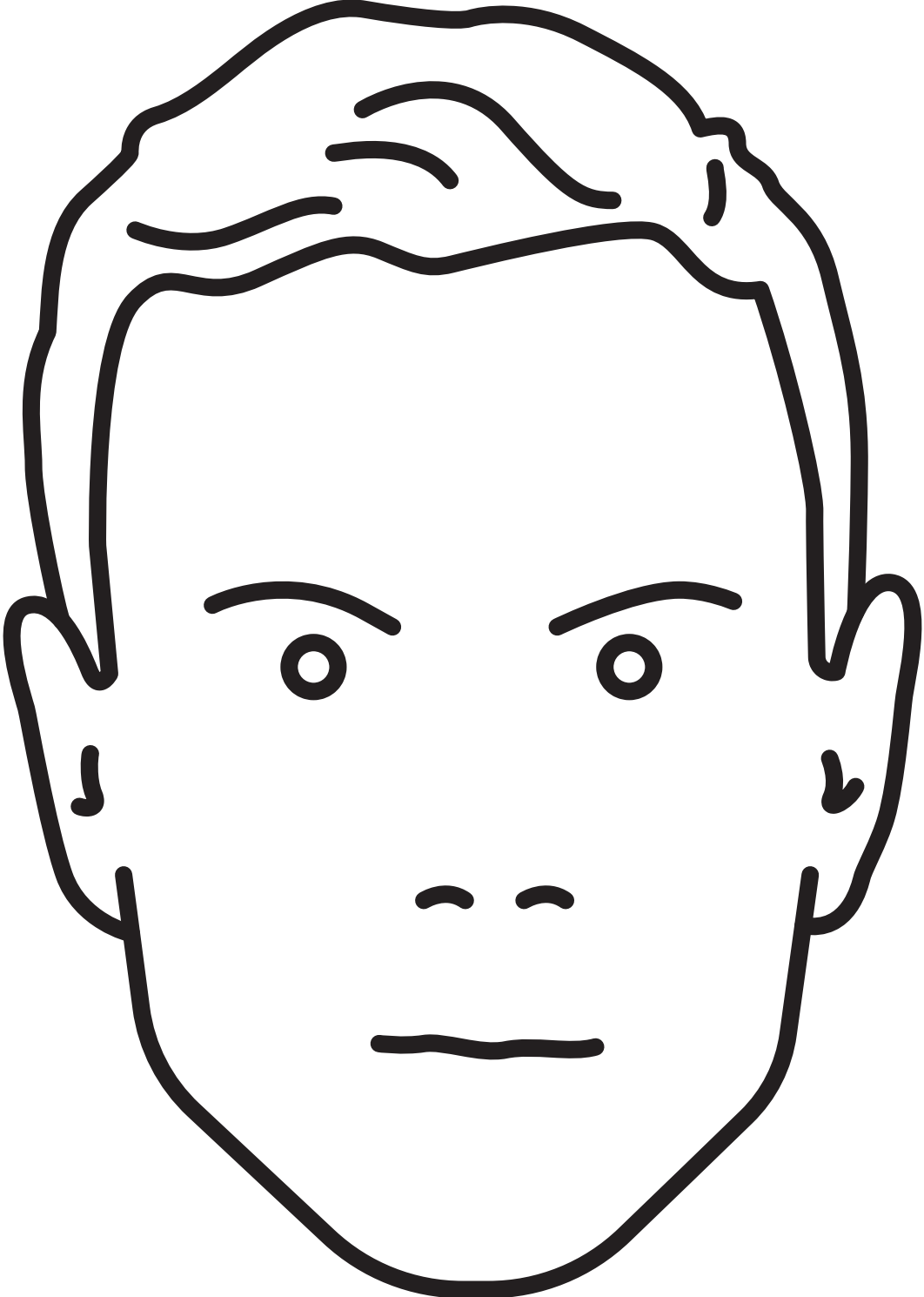


Casey Stoney

From Wickford to Wembley, footballer Casey Stoney MBE has come a long way. Growing up kicking a ball around the streets of Wickford, she became frustrated because the local boys teams wouldn't let her join as a girl. She quickly started to make them regret that decision. By the age of 12 she was already playing as a defender for Chelsea Ladies and by the time she was 18 she was a fully-fledged England international, going on to play 130 times for the national team, the 5th most of any England footballer as well as becoming team captain.

Even then, she still faced discrimination as woman. In 2007 her club, Charlton Athletic, got rid of the whole women's team after the men's team were relegated from the Premier League leading her to say "I'm disgusted with the club – the men get relegated and we get punished". She also had to take the brave step of coming out as a lesbian in 2014, something still rare for professional sportspeople. These experiences have made her a passionate advocate for LGBT+ and women's equality particularly within football and sport.

Casey Stoney retired in 2018 but her leadership skills quickly earned her a job as manager of the Manchester United Women. I imagine those clubs in Wickford would let her join their team now!

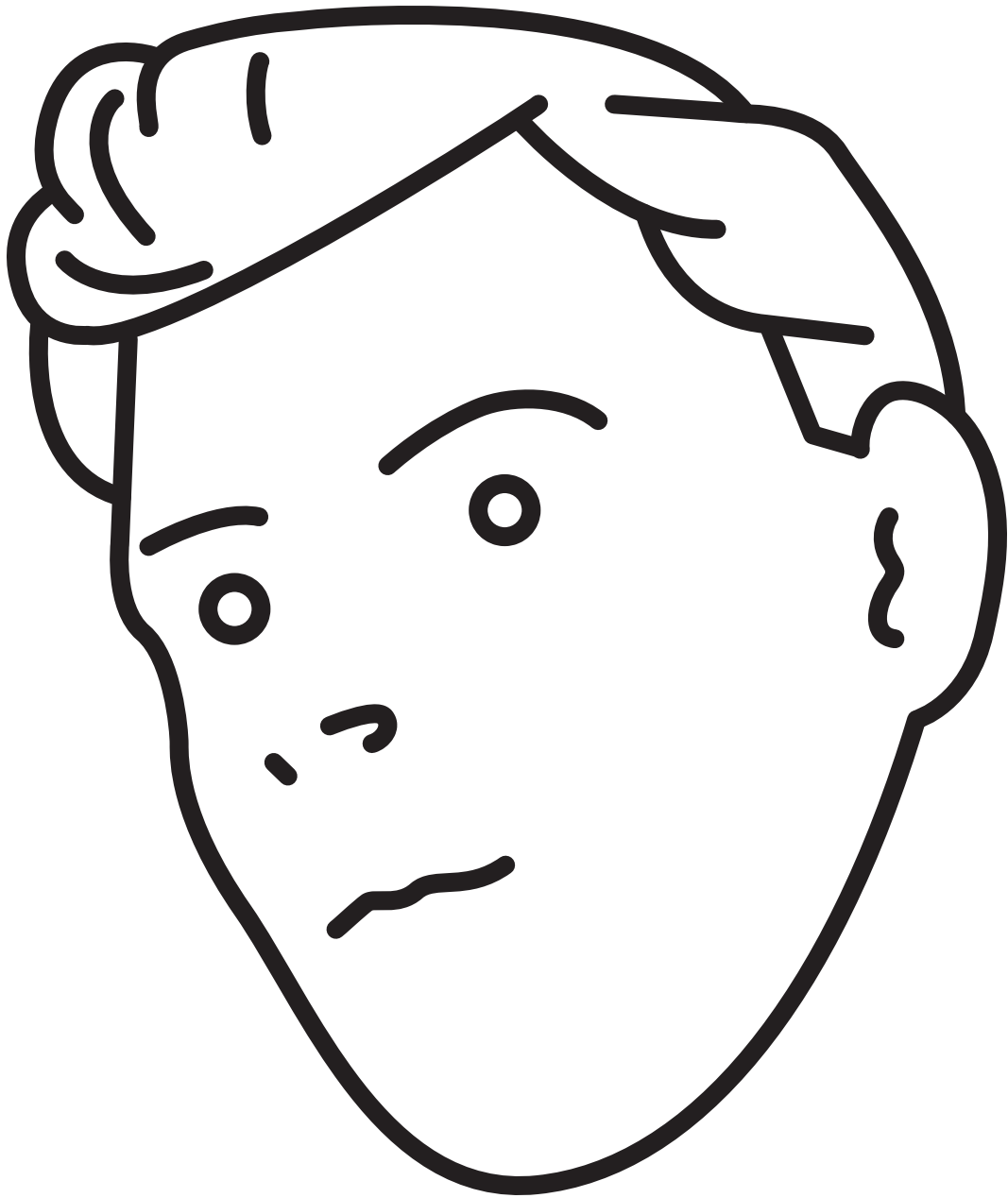


Mark Foster

Mark Foster was born in Billericay in 1970 and by the age of 15, he was the fastest swimmer in the country. To add to his many talents, Foster competed in television's Strictly Come Dancing in 2008.

Foster is a former competitive swimmer who represented Great Britain in the Olympics, world championships, and swam for England in the Commonwealth Games.

In terms of medals and longevity (1986–2008), he is amongst the most successful British swimmers of all time. He made a comeback at the national championships in July 2007 winning both events he competed in after barely training. He achieved the fifth best time in 2007 in the world at 50 metres freestyle and retired for the second time after the 2008 Olympics. He has six World Championship titles, two Commonwealth titles and eleven European titles to his name.



R.D. Wingfield

R.D. Wingfield was a crime novelist and the creator of Inspector William 'Jack' Frost, one of Britain's most popular fictional detectives. The television series 'A Touch of Frost' starred the nation's favourite David Jason (also known as Del Boy in Only Fools and Horses), transforming Inspector Frost into a household name. Born in Hackney in 1928, Rodney attended the Coopers Company school in the East End and was, along with the entire school, evacuated to Frome in Somerset during the second world war. Rodney then lived a quiet life here in Basildon, in Long Riding, where he was known as a thoughtful and generous man who liked cats and dogs.



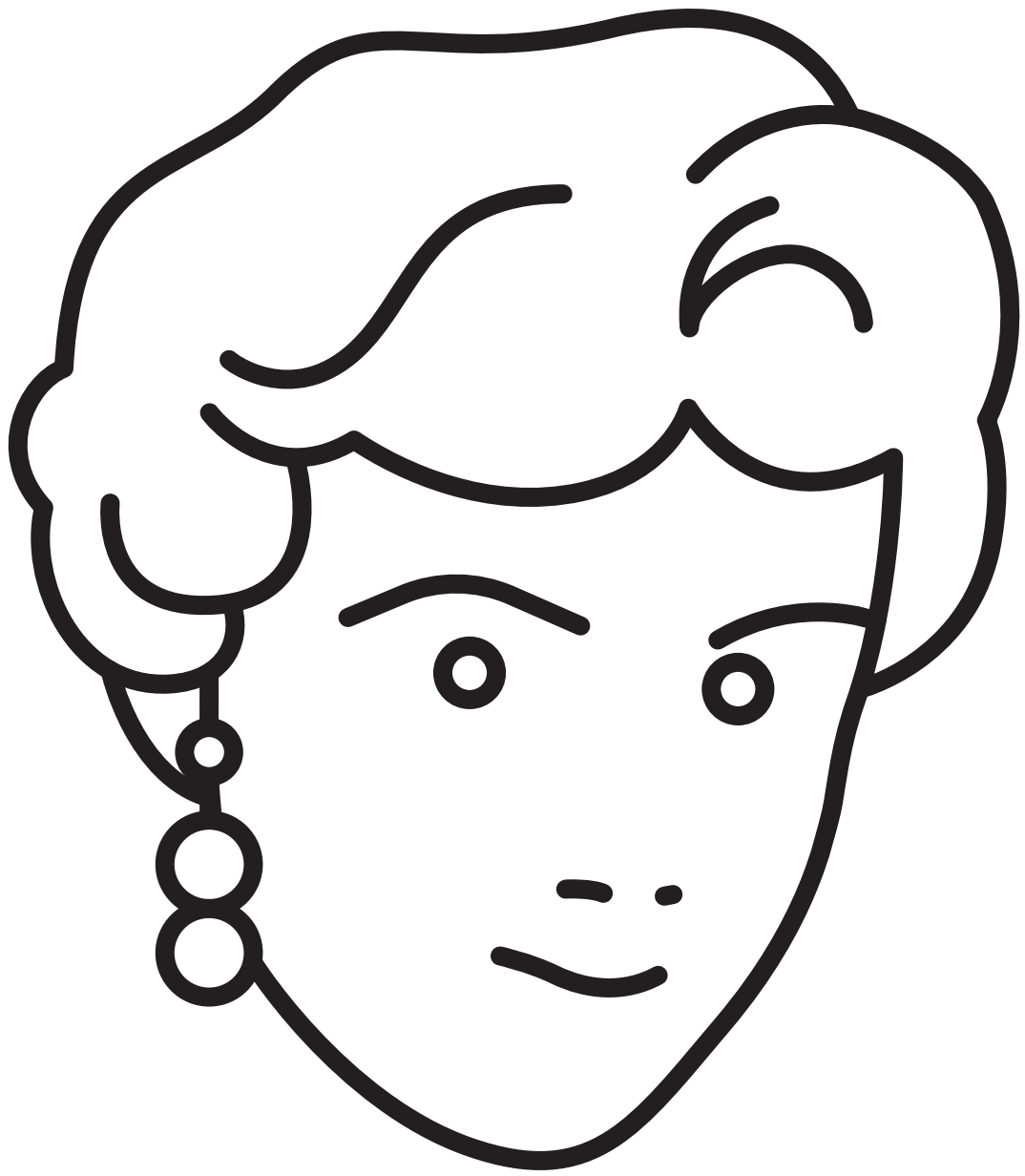
Alison Moyet

Alison Moyet is our singer, songwriter and performer from Laindon. Alison was awarded the Best British Female Solo Artist and to date has sold over 20 million records. Alison was born in Billericay Hospital in 1961. Alison attended Markham Chase Junior School (now Janet Duke School) moving on to Nicholas Comprehensive School (now James Hornsby High School). While at school like most children she learnt to play the recorder but at the same time taught herself the flute, and piano. At the school she was in the same year as Martin Gore and Andrew Fletcher, future members of Depeche Mode. On leaving school Alison began a music foundation course at Southend College of Technology with more musical studies following in London where she became a proficient piano tuner. She then teamed up with Vince Clarke to form 'Yazoo', with the group's first record 'Only You' going to number two in the charts. Their first album 'Upstairs at Eric's' went platinum in 1982. Following their split, her first solo album 'Alfie' went Quadruple platinum and sold over 1.5 million copies in the UK alone.



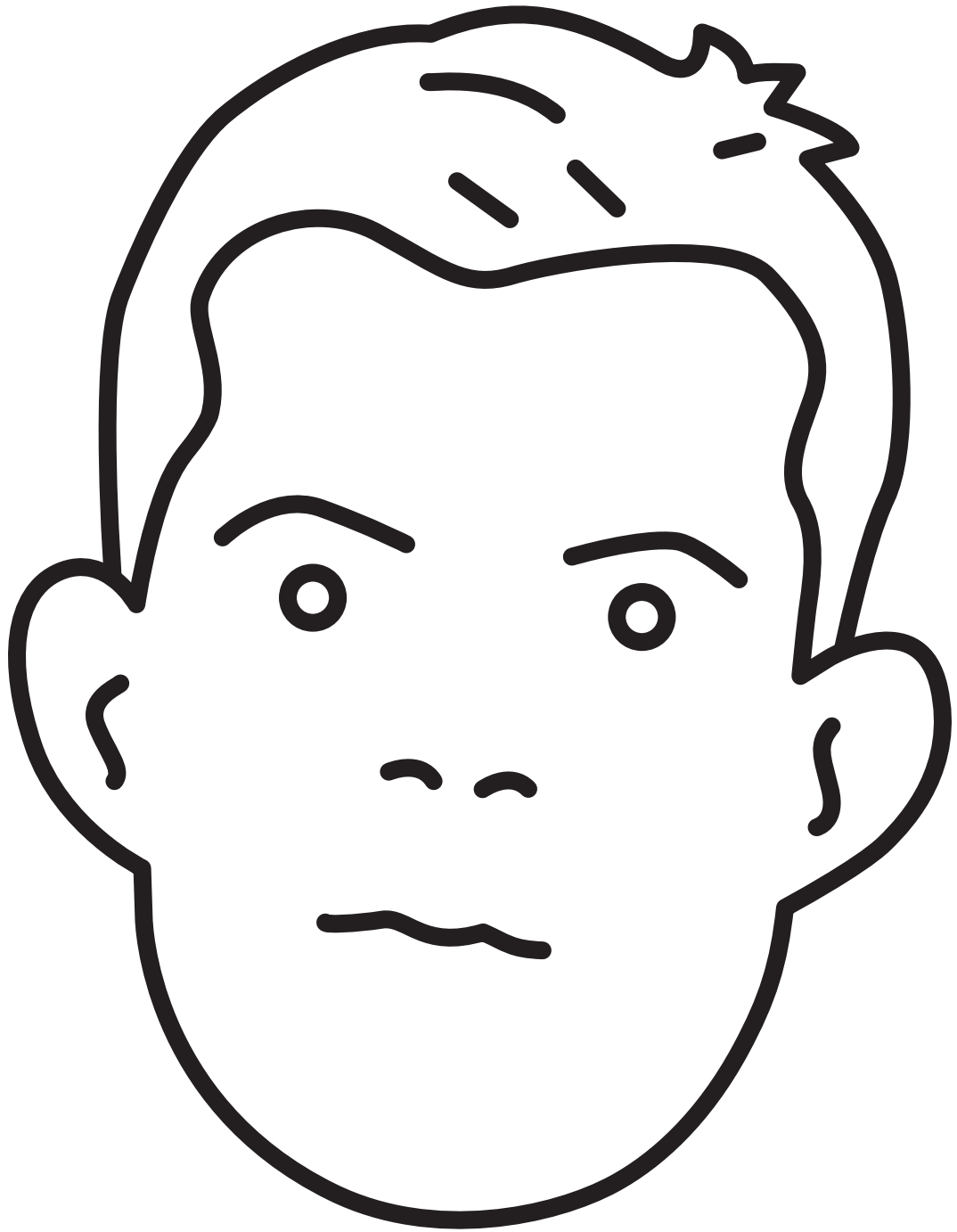
Jillean Hipsev

Jillean Hipsev is our netball queen and a legend in her own time. Born in 1948 in Laindon, and later moving to Langdon Hills, Jillean attended Markhams Chase and Fryerns Grammar School where her sporting ability shone through. By the time she was twenty-two she was captaining the Essex Metropolitan and the Eastern Region teams. On her first tour playing for England, she was nominated as Player of the Tournament, then going on to receive Player of the Year in 1978 and 1980. It was not long before she was captain, playing her last World Tournament in Glasgow in 1987. She retired as the first international player to make a hundred caps, earning her a place in the Guinness Book of Records. To add to the list of sporting accolades, Jillean was inducted into the England netball 'Hall of Fame' and later was made Honorary Life Member of the England Netball Association in 2015.



Joan Sims

Laindon girl, Joan Sims was an exuberant actress best known for her appearances in 24 of the 29 'Carry On' films, one of the British movie industry's biggest successes. Joan was born in Station House, in 1930 where her father was the Laindon railway station master. Joan's passion for performing began at an early age, with the station becoming her playground, where she would dress up and perform for the travellers. Joan was known for her high-spirited nature and sense of raucousness!



Russell Tovey

Billericay boy, actor Russell Tovey, was born in 1981. Russell was inspired to become an actor after seeing films such as 'Stand by Me' and 'Dead Poets Society'. He then joined a local drama club, where he was spotted by a talent agent and in his final year at junior school, he had a part in 'The Bill'. At the age of 13 he was cast in 'Mud' on CBBC. It was in his early twenties when he really began to make a name for himself, appearing in Alan Bennett's play 'The History Boys' at the Royal National Theatre. Outside of acting, Russell is also well-known for his podcast series 'Talk Art', which explores the magic of art and why it connects us all in such fantastic ways.