

Fun to kick off again at town's pier

FAMILIES are looking forward to the reopening of Clacton Pier, which gets underway this weekend.

Rides reopen for the first time this year on Saturday, along with the Seaquarium and other attractions.

Winter maintenance and inspections have taken place, and a special price of £1 for main rides will be in place.

The new Skull Point adventure golf and Discovery Bay soft play area will be open during February Half Term for the first time.

Operations manager Ewelina Majewska said: "It promises to be a busy time to kick off the new season."

About 30 new staff have been recruited and are being put through training this week.

Due to ongoing works in the central concourse, entry to the Seaquarium will be via Discovery Bay. A new filtration system has been fitted and further improvements to two tanks are underway.

Rob's Victorian yarn mixes fact and

Author's research of famous engineer unearths drama

By Tom Dalby
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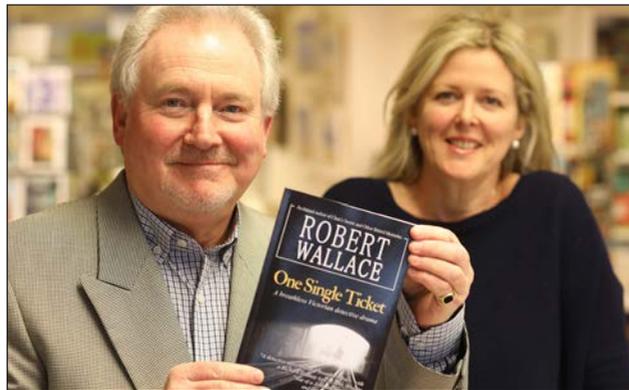
A TWISTING Victorian yarn set against the mysterious backdrop of a failed yet monumental engineering plan is the latest work of a successful Frinton writer.

After attempting to write a 2,000 word newspaper piece on revered 19th century engineer Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Robert Wallace released there was just too much material to limit the story to such a length.

"He is one of the great names in engineering history," said Robert.

"He lengthened the western rail line, designed the box tunnel – at the time the world's longest railway tunnel – and also built the SS Great Britain, the first iron-clad steamer to cross the Atlantic.

"I got to 3,000 words and I hadn't even got to his history with Bristol – I realised it



AMBITIOUS PLAN: Robert Wallace and his book, *One Single Ticket*, with Judith Charlesworth, of Caxton Books

would not be possible.

"But I had become so invested in it, I found it fascinating and couldn't let it go."

Wallace found intrigue in Brunel's hugely-ambitious plan to build a massive deep water harbour and pier at Portbury, linking with the railway line at Temple Meads Station.

His vision: A seamless journey from London into New York Harbour, via Bristol, on one single ticket.

Robert said: "It was an extraordinary concept, massively ahead of its time.

"People would have thought he was mad."

The plan was put in place, with a huge investment of

£200,000 pumped into the project.

But it was inexplicably abandoned in 1852.

Robert's research into the reasons behind the plan's demise led him to release there was great drama to be unearthed in the story.

These secrets and mysteries form the ingredients for Brunel's Vision: *One Single Ticket*, a Victorian drama set in and around Bristol.

Combining fact and fiction, the novel fuses real people and real places with invented characters and narrative.

"It has been described as a Victorian detective drama," said Rob.

"It's got a lot of great historical facts mixed with some really interesting fictional characters – fiction based on fact.

His books are available on Amazon, with *One Single Ticket* also available to buy from Caxton Books, in Connaught Avenue, Frinton.



Police hunt for burglary suspect

POLICE are hunting for a man with distinctive tattoos after a series of burglaries.

Essex Police are on the lookout for Laurence Wheatley, 54, after burglary offences in Jaywick.

Wheatley, from Jaywick, is of slim build and is about 5ft 5ins tall.

A police spokesman said: "He has various tattoos on his arms and hands, including snakes, a rose and playing cards.

"He works as a mechanic by trade."

Anyone with information about his whereabouts can call Clacton police station on 101 or Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555111.

Get in touch

Call our Clacton and Frinton reporters with your news on 01255 221221 or e-mail cf.gazette@newsquest.co.uk

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DAVID, ACCOUNTANT

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