

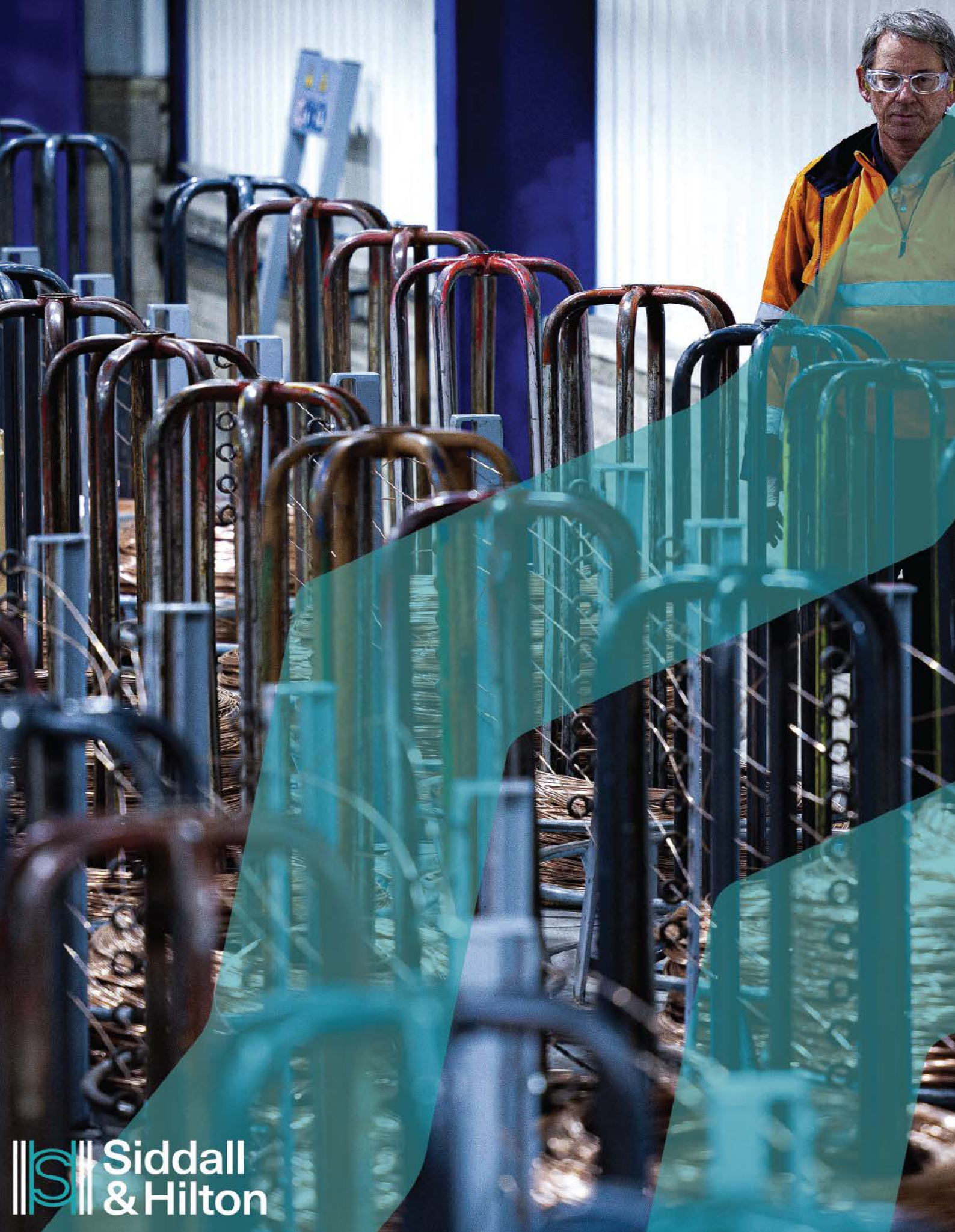
FENCING TIMES

UK & Ireland

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**AES iGate now
supports e-Loop**



Fencing Times

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Assumption is the mother of all f*ckups

On my first day at work in the fencing industry, my boss said to me: “Here’s a RAL colour fan. Look after it, because you won’t get just another one at the powder coating workshop. Check the numbers and the names carefully, and every time you have to write down a colour somewhere, write down both the number and the name.”

I got used to doing it back then and since that time I’ve always done it. Does something need to be in RAL 8017? Oh, then that’s Chocolate Brown. People who saw me do it didn’t understand why. Surely that’s twice as much work? Have you got too much time on your hands?”

But it’s really not that much work. It’s usually just one or two words, and it achieves two important things. Number 1, other people’s mistakes come to light earlier. How many times have you had a customer unable to choose between RAL 5010 Gentian Blue and RAL 5011 Steel Blue? He’s not sure, he rings another three times to discuss it and eventually orders 5011, but he actually wanted Gentian Blue. With all his wavering back and forth he’s got the numbers confused.

If you place his order in RAL 5011, he’ll get a colour he doesn’t want. And he certainly couldn’t blame you for that; you supplied exactly what he ordered. But your customer wouldn’t be happy with his fence. And if he somehow managed to order his window frames in Gentian Blue, then he’d end up with two different colours on and around his house. And what would you do then? Uninstall everything, have it recoated and reinstalled and then charge full price for it?

Number 2: you give others the chance to catch your own mistakes for you. If you yourself get confused – because you heard a whole long list of colour numbers during a discussion with a customer – and write RAL 5010 (Steel Blue) on the order at a powder coating workshop, the coater will be on the phone immediately to ask which of the two you mean. If you’d only written 5010, you would have got Gentian Blue.

And then you have to ask yourself: how often does that happen? Nine times out of ten everything will be fine if you write down only the colour number or only the colour name. Maybe even 99 percent of the time. But then that hundredth time you’re very happy that you didn’t have 400 metres coated in Gentian Blue when it should have been Steel Blue. And you don’t even need a RAL colour fan for that these days; at www.ralcolor.com and www.ralcolorchart.com you’ll find a comprehensive overview of all the colours, in six languages.

Besides catching any colour errors in your orders, always writing down both the colour number and the colour name has an underlying advantage that’s actually much more important. Every time you write down a colour twice you’re momentarily reminded that things can go wrong if you don’t double-check them, or if you don’t build in safeguards that ensure that someone else can do their job and be certain that they’re doing the right thing without needing to make any assumptions. Because Murphy’s Law (what can go wrong, will go wrong) doesn’t just apply to colour numbers. It applies to everything. And nine times out of ten something goes wrong because there are several people involved in something, all of whom assume that the others have done or will do their job properly, without being 100 percent sure of it.





This is true of all sorts of things. When you send a colleague on an errand, when you send an order to a supplier, when you give a work order to an installer, when you ask someone to check that an invoice is correct – if you're not extremely clear and specific about what needs to be done and how it needs to be done, then things are guaranteed to go wrong at some point. "Assumption is the mother of all f*ckups," as Steven Seagal put it in the film *Under Siege 2*. Because everyone does what's logical to them, not what's logical to you. And the two are not always the same.

If a coater receives an order with the number RAL 5011, he'll coat all the materials in that order in Steel Blue. He's not going to call you asking why you're ordering Steel Blue all of a sudden, when you normally always order Gentian Blue if something needs to be blue. There are so many customers who order one particular colour regularly, but now and then order another. And anyway, why would he care? He's covered, because he has an order that says 5011. If it later turns out that it should have been 5010 then he'll just coat the stuff again, right? Then he can send you another invoice.

In that same fencing company where I started out, there was an installer called Johnny. I've written about him before. Johnny was a very reliable and loyal installer, who always did his best and never made mistakes. He did everything you told him to. So if you said to Johnny, "Chuck that ladder on the Iveco for me," then that would be done, no problem.

¹⁾With apologies to any coaters reading; we know that there are plenty of good, proactive coaters out there. This was just to give an example.

But then later on you'd also have to say, "Secure the ladder to the Iveco," because otherwise when you were on your way back to the business you'd look in the rearview mirror and see that ladder bouncing across the motorway.

There are plenty of Johnnys in the world, and not just in installation either. They're in the office, and on the management team too. In Johnny's case he was simply incapable. He was unable to remember more than one task at a time. For some other people it's just that they don't want to. They're too lazy or too idle to think proactively. But the vast majority of people, whether you work with them or give them directions or ask favours of them, would have wanted to be proactive but it simply never occurred to them that you might have meant something else.

They really don't do it to annoy you. They're simply doing their jobs, and doing what's logical to them. Or familiar. Or what they always do. And in the meantime they're concerned with their own problems, not yours.

So it means you can avoid a lot of f*ckups if you think ahead about how another person might interpret an instruction, an order, a message or a task. And every time you write down a colour number twice, you'll be reminded of it. It helps you to internalise discipline, to think ahead in everything you do. ■

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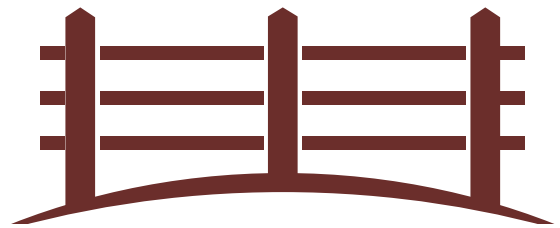
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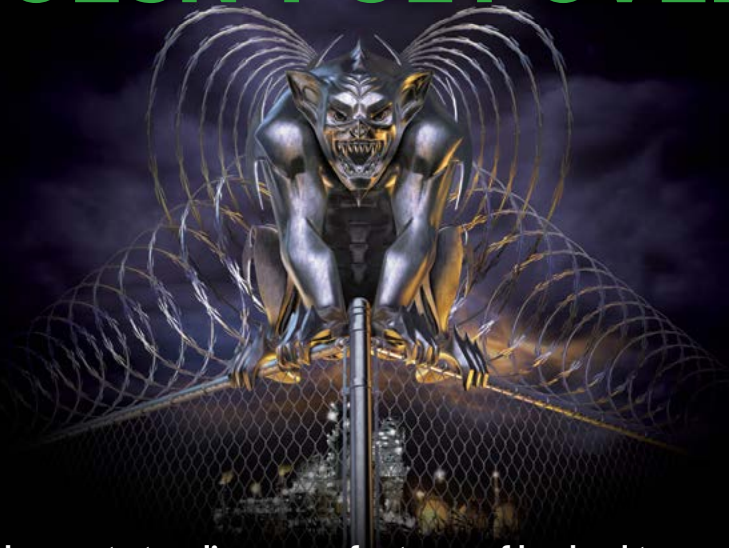
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FENCE POST



Alfred @ Focus 4+

We received this photo of a Mikado, Bamboo or Jungle fence, or whatever you like to call it, from Alfred Berghorst of Focus 4+ Montage, who fitted it on a jetty in Vinkeveen. Good job, Alfred. It's always nice when you get to install somewhere where you can clearly see what a great boat you could buy, as long as you fulfil enough metres in your career. Many thanks for the photo!

fencepost@fencingtimes.com

Have you got a tip for us? Or taken part in something great that you want to share with the market? Spotted a beautiful fence or a beautiful gate? Or perhaps a really ugly fence, which you turned into a great photo? Let us know and share it with your colleagues in the sector.

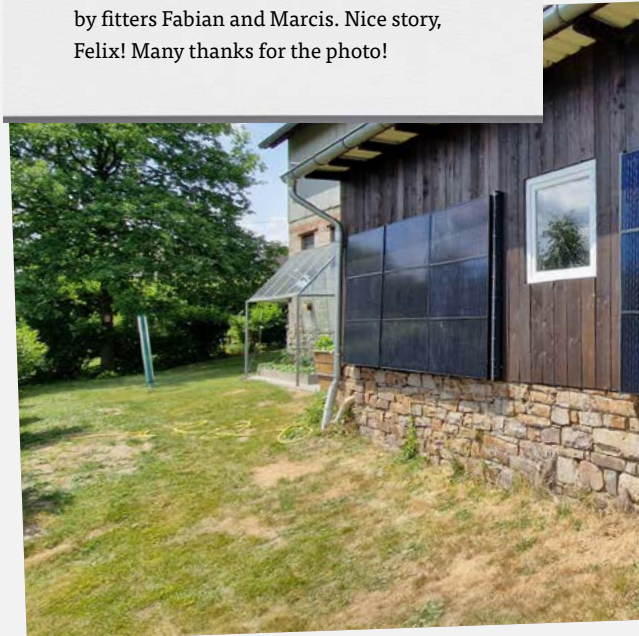


Felix @ Zaunteam

Felix Borgard of Zaunteam Südwestfalen from Wiehl, east of Cologne, sent us two photos. The first is an unusual wrought-iron gate, which he came across near Cologne. That's a lovely example, Felix, you don't see many like that any more.

Felix @ Zaunteam

Felix sent his second photo in response to an article from a previous issue of our German edition about an attachment system that allows you to add solar panels to a fence. Zaunteam also has a solar fence in its range, which in this customer's case, however, was not set in the ground but fitted to a shed. Completely logical of course – first you add solar panels to a fence and then you fit the complete fence to a shed. But it's not such a stupid idea as it would appear to be. The solar fence in the Zaunteam range is designed and made as a fence. It doesn't have any accessories for mounting the panels directly on a roof or wall. So what to do then, if you're a fencing installer? Rather than sending your customer to someone who supplies roof or wall panels, you install a complete fence on the shed. Especially if it's the hunting cabin of someone you know, who powers his fridge with the solar panels. At least then you can always call on him if you fancy a beer during a walk in the woods. The project was devised and organised by project manager Jens and the fence work on the barn made by fitters Fabian and Marcis. Nice story, Felix! Many thanks for the photo!



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Andreas @ Rotec

Andreas Linse from the Rotec fencing business in Berlin came across this gate with matching fencing in Cala Ratjada, a village on the Spanish island of Majorca. Nice fence, nice gate and nice photo. Thanks for sending it in, Andreas!







Julien @ Naas

These photos are courtesy of Julien Sequin from Grillages Naas in Villenave d'Ornon, near Bordeaux. He came across this particular fence at the Hellfest site in Clisson, in the Loire-Atlantique département. We'd never heard of it before, but apparently Hellfest is Europe's biggest Punk and Metal festival. The entrance gate to the festival site comprises a fence with a sheet metal infill on which the craziest images have been carved. As a tribute to artists who have since passed away, several stained-glass windows have also been incorporated into the fence. Great story and great photos, Julien. Thanks for sending it in! The Locinox Construction Radio is coming your way!

Do you too have a nice photo for us? Send it to fencepost@fencingtimes.com. Every month, Locinox awards one sender with this great Construction Radio.

Stiff fine for Limerick City Council after fatal accident with sliding gate

Limerick City Council in the west of Ireland was fined 75,000 euros in May for being responsible for a death. A court jury found the Council to be liable for a 2015 accident in which a Limerick city street cleaner got trapped between the leaf of the sliding gate at the entrance to the municipal yard and a wall. He died as a result of injuries.

The gate was only secured by a single photocell, on the inside. There were no safety edges and the motor had no power safeguards. Furthermore, it was the habit among colleagues at the yard that the first one to arrive would open the gate using the GSM module, and then place a plank in front of the photocell so that the gate would stay open.

In this case, the court presumed that the street cleaner called the GSM module twice in quick succession. The second time probably by accident from his trouser pocket. As a result, the gate, which had only just started opening, was already closing when the street cleaner bent down in the opening to place the plank in front of the photocell. The gate leaf then crushed him between the closing portal and the concrete wall behind that closing portal.

The leaf continued to crush him until a colleague who arrived 10 minutes later saw what was happening and phoned to open the gate again. Rescuers attempted unsuccessfully to resuscitate the man.

As owner of the municipal yard and employer of the street cleaner, Limerick City Council pleaded guilty to breaching the Safety, Health and Welfare Act and was fined 75,000 euros. ■

Photo: Google Streetview



Cardin expands its Ultimate Cardin App

Italian drive manufacturer Cardin Elettronica, from Codognè to the north of Venice, is expanding its Ultimate Cardin App to include a quotation tool. This will enable installers to offer Cardin products to their customers quickly and easily.

“Cardin Ultimate is a unique database of all Cardin-related information,” sales manager Fabio Amore says. “There’s a lot of information that comes along with electronic and automation products: specifications, wiring diagrams, compatibility tables, installation manuals, you name it. We wanted to bundle all that information together and make it easy to find, to enable our clients – at every level, from salespeople to installers – to find the tools they need in an intuitive way, whether in sales or installation or after-sales.”

The products are classified by category and range, with each product page containing photos, descriptions, technical data, and installation diagrams, as well as user and installation manuals, and certificates of conformity. There’s also a list of compatible accessories and products available for each product. *“You can save your favourite products in a special area,” Amore says. “Then they’re available offline too; you don’t have to download them separately. All products can be searched by code, name or keyword, and there’s a selection mode that enables you to display all the available solutions for particular functions.”*

Cardin has now expanded the Ultimate App with the addition of a system to generate PDF quotations. *“Customers can enter all Cardin products, and other items as well,” Amore says. “They’re able to enter notes and other information. After that they can generate a quote with a single click.”* Quotations can include the installer’s company details and logo if required. They can also be saved in an archive, and reopened later for rapid editing.

The Ultimate Cardin App is available for all IOS and Android devices. It is free of charge and available in six languages: Italian, English, French, German, Spanish and Dutch. ■



AES launches new GSM opener with E-Loop integration

AES Global, an intercom manufacturer from Cookstown, Northern Ireland, has launched a new version of its i-Gate GSM opener. The i-Gate Plus is a combination of the existing i-Gate Prime and i-Gate 1200 and can also operate the E-Loop wireless exit loop.

“Since its launch last year, the E-Loop exit detector has been a big hit for us,” says marketing manager Oliver Boyd. “You no longer have to cut loops in the road surface, you simply screw the E-Loop to the ground. But the E-loop has no software on board, it only opens the gate when it detects a car. A number of customers asked us to provide additional features. That’s why we’ve now created a separate version of our i-Gate GSM opener, with which you can make the E-Loop smarter.”

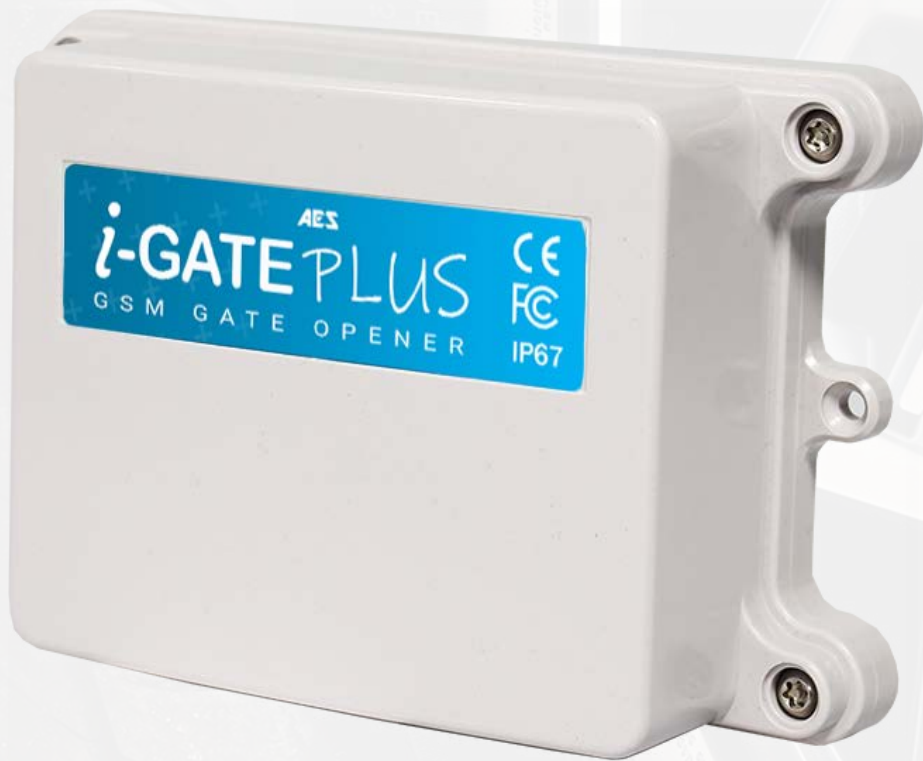
I-GATE

The i-Gate from AES is a GSM opener. It has a SIM card that you can phone or send an SMS to. If the i-Gate recognises the phone number, it sends an opening signal to the gate controller. There are two versions so far: the i-Gate Prime and the i-Gate 1200. The Prime has 2 relays and enough memory for 250 phone numbers. You can use a single i-Gate Prime to operate both your entrance gate and garage, or the electric opener of a pedestrian entrance. It also has a log function and a weekly clock. The i-Gate 1200 does not have the log function or the weekly clock. It features just one relay. On the plus side though, you can programme 1,200 phone numbers into the memory. You can programme and operate both i-Gates via an app.





Oliver Boyd with the E-Loop and the i-Gate



I-GATE PLUS

The new i-Gate Plus combines the functions of the Prime and the 1200. Like the 1200, it has only one relay, but you can record 1200 numbers in it and it has the log function and weekly clock. The Plus can also be operated via an app. "And furthermore, you can use it to operate the E-Loop," says Boyd. "That was the whole point. We have a special eTrans plugin for that. You can set it up to send an SMS message when the E-Loop's battery is running low. But the iGate's most important feature is a separate timer specifically for the E-Loop. This can be set up so that the E-loop only opens the gate during opening hours, for example. This will stop an intruder from climbing over the fence at night and driving what he steals to the exit using an on-site forklift. And finally, you can set the time after which the gate should close again if the vehicle does not drive out, but stays on the E-Loop."

COMBINATION

"Individually, the E-Loop and the I-Gate are compact, useful tools that offer the gate's users a lot of extra convenience," says Boyd. "But together they form the ideal combination. You can use them to offer your customers a wide range of access control features, without immediately putting them to a great deal of expense." For the technically minded: The new i-Gate Plus runs on a 12- or 24-volt power supply, direct or alternating current. The relay can switch 24 volts at 2 ampere, can be normally open or normally closed, and is both triggering and latching. The i-Gate Plus works with all three E-Loop models: With the Domestic, the Commercial and the Commercial In-ground. ■



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Image: Bi-folding speed gate Quattro 8 x 2,25 m

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In addition to being a fencing installer, Livia Graf is a photographer. Whenever her guys finish off a project, she drives to it and takes stunning fencing photos. This is one of them.

Reducing gaps – reduce the risk

In my previous column, as part of our Gate Safety by Design series, we focused on the importance of end stops to prevent a sliding gate from over travelling. To reiterate: risk assessment is key to rule out any potential safety hazards resulting from an inherently poor design and construction of a gate. Eliminating the safety and construction risks from the gate design in the first instance will make for not only a safer system, that will require less additional safety features fitted on the gate when it is finally commissioned, it will ultimately result in a more cost effective and efficient service for the end customer. An important consideration to ensure a safe installation with swing gates is the need to eliminate any gaps between the post and the hang stile of the gate leaf if there is a reducing gap when the gate is in operation.

Gate Safe is aware of numerous incidents where crushing injuries have occurred as a result of a finger or limb becoming trapped as a gate closes or opens.

There are two ways to eliminate this risk. The best way is to design out the risk of impact and crushing from the beginning, by ensuring that the gap does not reduce when the gate opens (or closes) by virtue of the way the leaves are hung on the posts and the sections used for the leaf and the post. If this cannot be done – for example on a bespoke gate due to the local conditions of the site – there is another option in the guise of finger trap guards. These can easily be fitted onto any swing gate to prevent fingers, hands or arms from accessing the reducing gap at the gate post which ultimately mitigates the risk from the design.




richard@gate-safe.org

Richard Jackson

For many years, Richard Jackson was responsible for running English fencing business H.S. Jackson & Son. Based in Ashford, Kent, it's one of the largest fencing companies in the UK. In 2010, after separate gate accidents took the lives of two children in quick succession, Richard founded Gate Safe, a charity dedicated to increasing gate safety. In 2012 he handed the reins of Jacksons Fencing to his brother Peter, freeing himself to focus entirely on Gate Safe.



CAUTION
AUTOMATIC GATE
DO NOT OPERATE UNLESS CLEAR



Clearly Gate Safe would always recommend a safe design from the outset as the preferred option, but if finger trap guards are fitted it is important to ensure they deliver the correct level of protection. Therefore, check that they cover the whole height of the gate. Please also check that the fitting is sufficiently secure and is not at risk of becoming loose following normal operation of the gate. A poorly fitted finger guard may actually result in creating a trap hazard on the gate. Make sure the finger guard protrudes outwards, or all the efforts will be in vain and there is a chance that a finger or hand could still become trapped. Make sure you check that finger traps are still working correctly during all routine maintenance checks.

Talking of maintenance, don't forget to also check the hinges as part of the service visit. If the hinges are fitted behind a finger trap guard, be sure to ensure that they are still of suitable construction and that there is no wear and tear on the hinge pin, eye or bolt which could contribute to causing the gate to fall. ■



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Securing an embassy with perimeter detection

*Part 5 in the series 'High-Tech
Perimeter Security in Practice'*

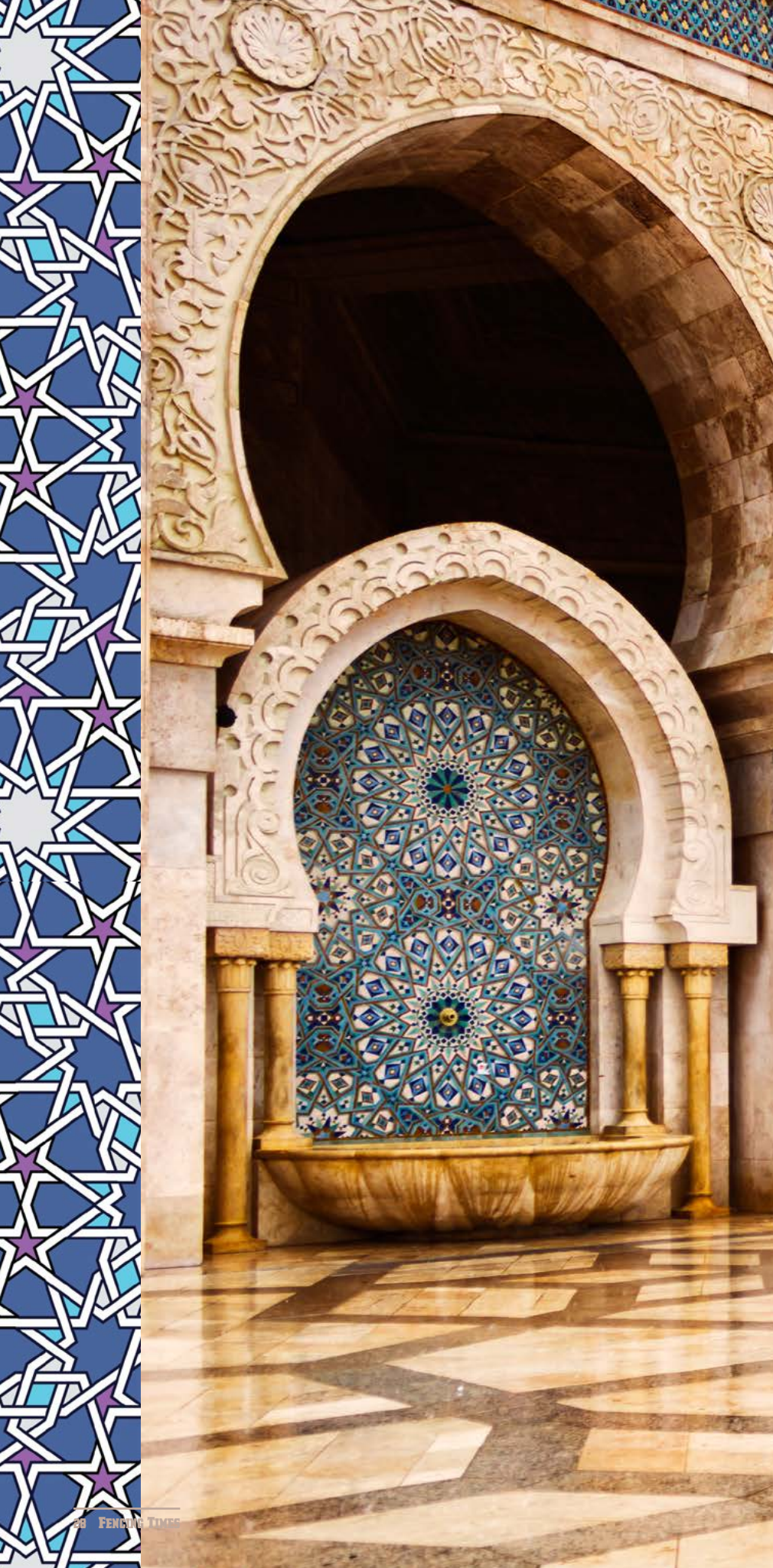


rajmond@fencingtimes.com

Rajmond Rondeel

Rajmond Rondeel has worked in perimeter security for many years. For Fencing Times, he writes about securing outdoor areas with detection systems. Do you have questions? Or a practical example - and are curious what Rajmond would have offered here? Send him an email at rajmond@fencingtimes.com





This column isn't about an example of a new installation, but of a perimeter security maintenance job. I'd just started working for a supplier that sold all sorts of types of perimeter security throughout Europe, when a maintenance job came in for the embassy and residence of a wealthy oil-producing country, in a European capital that shall remain unnamed. I can't disclose which embassy and which capital city it was, but it was a location that can't usually be accessed. The ground detection system required maintenance, and my boss thought it was a good idea for me to go along with the technician so that I could learn more about ground detection systems in practice. I had absolutely no idea what to expect.

Even just confirming the appointment was quite an undertaking. Embassies prefer not to let too many strangers in anyway, and in this case we were foreign nationals (not from the oil state, and not from the country in which the embassy was located). What were we coming to do? Couldn't someone else do it? Such as technicians from the capital in question, who came in anyway for things like the fire alarm system? How long would it take? Who were we? And obviously we first needed to send copies of our passports for screening. After a few weeks we finally got the green light. We were welcome, but we had to finish off both the embassy and the residence in a single day. We didn't think that would be a problem. The locations were close to each other, in a typical leafy embassy neighbourhood in a big capital city.

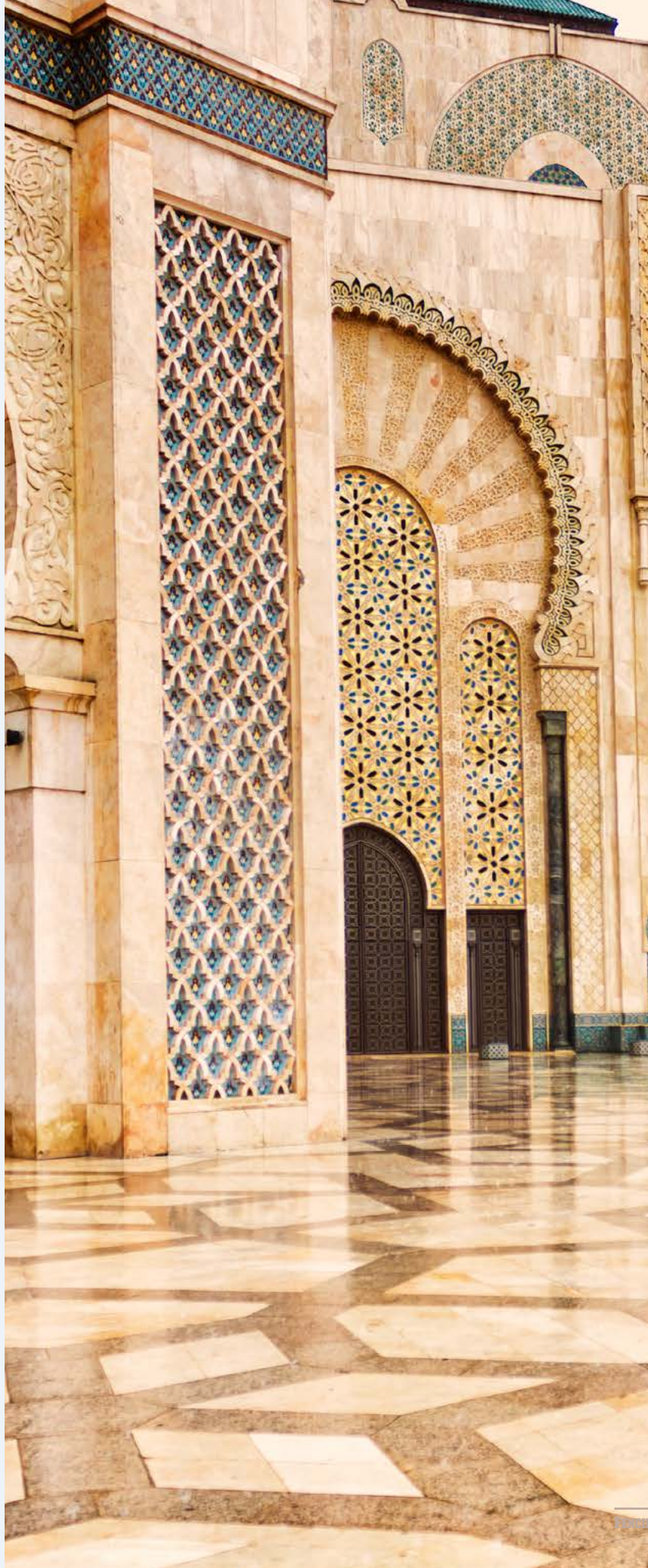
PALACE

When we rolled up with our van full of equipment, I couldn't believe my eyes. Right in the middle of that busy city, in a stunning location, was a completely newly-built embassy that looked like a palace. As I said, it was the embassy of a very wealthy oil state – and the state certainly wanted to project that wealthy image. Everywhere you looked there was marble and natural stone, both indoors and out. But we were still a long way from getting indoors.

The embassy had been purpose-built a year or two previously for tens of millions of euros. A bit further on, at the US embassy, the security measures were very visible. Guards everywhere, high fences, anti-ram-raid bollards, you name it. At our embassy, all those visible security measures had been avoided. The architect had had fun designing a building that could have come straight out of a tale from the Arabian Nights. There were security measures in place, but the guards and cameras were not too obvious and the fence was cast iron with gold spikes on it. It was also only 2 metres high and was between natural stone walls, which you could have used relatively easily as a step to climb over it. But that was precisely where the invisible ground detection system came into its own. It was located directly behind the fence, under the natural stone surface. So while it looked like the embassy had little security, the entire lot was actually surrounded by a passive ground detection system of the type I have described in detail in previous columns. It was the system with two hoses, filled with a liquid that can detect any intruders on the premises through differences in pressure. The intruders cause these pressure differences when crossing the hoses.

THEORY

And that was the system we were there to perform maintenance on. In theory this meant that the maintenance pits with the valves, and the pits containing the sensors, needed to be opened. Then, for the sensors, the hoses had to be 'bled' of air as you would a radiator. For the valves you then use a hand pump and liquid to bring the hoses back up to the correct pressure. After that you test the system by walking and crawling over the hoses. You then need to check each alarm zone to ensure that running and crawling triggers an alarm in the central cabinet. You might also need to adjust the sensitivity a bit here and there. Easy peasy.





GETTING IN

But in practice things were a little different. We reported our arrival to the intercom, after which the security staff came to collect us. They took our passports and left us in a sort of waiting room. We wouldn't see those passports again until we signed off on the job. And while we gawked at all the splendour around us, the facility manager (with whom we had the appointment) was called. He came to collect us a little later, and asked us to come through to the garden. This first required us to go through a security scanner, the type they have at the airport. Yes but hang on, we said. We need our tools. They're still in the van. Did we want to go and get them? So we lugged a laptop, a tool box, a spade and a probe, a set of walkie talkies, a wheelbarrow with a vat full of liquid, and a hand pump through a few sets of electric gates and doors, to the room with the security scanner. But we weren't exactly welcomed with open arms. All eyes were on us, and they weren't friendly. A vat of liquid!?

COMEDY

Writing it down makes me laugh all over again. It was like something out of a comedy, or a hidden camera tv show. Hmm, perhaps it hadn't been such a good idea after all, said the facility manager. And on top of everything else, our wheelbarrow had left quite a few marks on all the beautiful natural stone in the hall. After a lot of very noisy back-and-forth between him and the security staff, full of passion and gesticulation of

course, in a language we didn't understand, it was clear that this wasn't going to work. There was no way we were going to be allowed to enter the embassy here. They came up with a different route. After our van had undergone a thorough security search, a very rare exception was made for us to drive into the car park under the embassy.

Naturally this was sealed off with a very sturdy electric gate on the street side plus another speed gate once you reached the building, but eventually we got into the garage, where the light turned on for us automatically. Then we were able to drive our van around looking for a parking spot amongst the dark, shiny, gleaming embassy limousines, with little flags on the front and rear mudguards, and personalised CD number plates. Corps Diplomatique, virtually inviolable. With the first letter of the oil state and then numbered from 1 to... how many did they actually have? More than enough, I can tell you. For me as a car-lover it was truly an excess of riches, because I don't think I have to tell you that these weren't Twingos.

RULES

I really struggled not to take a picture of it with my phone, but of course "no photos" quickly echoed through the car park. The security guard who was with us – and stayed with us – was very clear on that. We didn't have to hand over our phones just yet. While we're going through the rules, here's what we had to do: on the grounds and in the garden we were required to follow the same rules as the security staff, meaning that no



matter who you encountered, eye contact was forbidden. So we were not permitted to look at anyone or try to make eye contact, including for example through windows or with embassy staff. "And certainly not with women," was additionally specified. You'd almost think they'd been talking to my wife!

CHALLENGES

In the garden and on the grounds, however, there were very different challenges awaiting us. Because the system, which had been installed in the freshly-landscaped garden just a year or two before, was now nicely hidden and invisible in a well-established garden. Where were those maintenance pits again? The technician I was with had a rough idea, but when he'd installed it everything had looked very different. There hadn't been any rose bushes and rhododendrons then. And that lawn, which strongly resembled the court at Wimbledon, hadn't been there yet either. But those pits had to be there somewhere. Grrr. The big advantage of the passive ground detection system, which is that it is unaffected by bushes, flower beds and shrubbery, suddenly becomes a big disadvantage when poor documentation and poor memory are added to the mix. So where were the pits? Can you picture the scene? Two men with a wheelbarrow, a spade and a probe trying to find the cover of a maintenance pit. In an architect-designed garden, where state portraits of visiting senior officials are taken. Walking straight

through the rose bushes, ouch. The security guard was again not amused. And we might not have been allowed to look in through the windows and make eye contact – but they were looking at us, I can tell you. With great suspicion.

MAINTENANCE

Naturally everything worked out in the end, mainly thanks to the probe. With the security guard's permission, we immediately took the opportunity to record the precise locations of the maintenance pits by means of a very clear photograph. That way the whole search would be a bit easier next time, even if it was another technician doing it. At last we could get started on the maintenance. I think by now it was at least two hours later. But money was no object, as would later become clear.

Around 400 metres of ground detection were involved in total, so there were a total of four pits containing the four sensors and the four valves. Just under two hours later, all the sensors had been bled and the valves repressurised. Now it was time to test the system. My colleague took his laptop to the system's central cabinet. This was located in the building's technical room, near the other infrastructure related to the building's security and automation. Each alarm zone had a relay that, if the alarm was triggered, sent a signal to the embassy's security management system. This is the system that guards sit there watching, which turns a camera on when an alarm is raised. Each alarm zone now had to be tested separately, to check that the zone recognised the alarm and that the relevant relay was activated.



TESTING

I waited outside. We kept in touch via our walkie-talkies, and it was a good thing we had them with us, because we wouldn't have been able to do it via mobile phone. The technical room was tucked away deep under the building at the same level as the car park. And of course it was a big secure bunker with plenty of steel and concrete. There was no mobile phone signal whatsoever inside that room. I walked or crawled through the garden and across the natural stone tiles on command, to ensure that the system's alarm was triggered. It's important that no one else is in that zone while testing is underway, as an alarm would be triggered too quickly or at the wrong time – and my colleague would then have adjusted the sensitivity accordingly, when it wasn't needed. So any guards or other people with you need to stand still too, or at least not walk in that alarm zone. That can be a bit of a hassle, especially when there's a security guard breathing down your neck who can only speak his own language. Fortunately I was left alone during this phase. Our guard had chosen to go inside with my colleague, so the walk and crawl test could be carried out without too much of an issue. Needless to say they were watching via the cameras to see what I was up to. Well, not much actually. Crawling on command and then spending ages waiting around until it was time to test the next zone wasn't too hard. Trying not to look inside, at all the grandeur and the mysterious (and stunningly attractive) women was much more difficult.

THE RESIDENCE

Luckily it was all tested relatively quickly and we were able to pack everything up again, then drive our van a few hundred metres down the road to the ambassador's residence. In ordinary English: the house. But ordinary it was not: it was built in the same style as the embassy, just slightly smaller. Or better put, slightly less big. We could do it all again nice and quickly, we thought. We had to make up for lost time. But alas, it didn't work out that way. Because the entire security process started all over again. Because despite the fact that our passports had been left behind at the embassy and despite the fact that the facility manager had driven down with us, we were again asked countless questions and our tools were carefully inspected by bodyguards in well-cut Italian suits, the jackets of which were just a little too big. It was like something out of a film. Fortunately it was a bit easier to get into the garden here with our wheelbarrow and tools. We were also able to find the maintenance pits more quickly at this location.

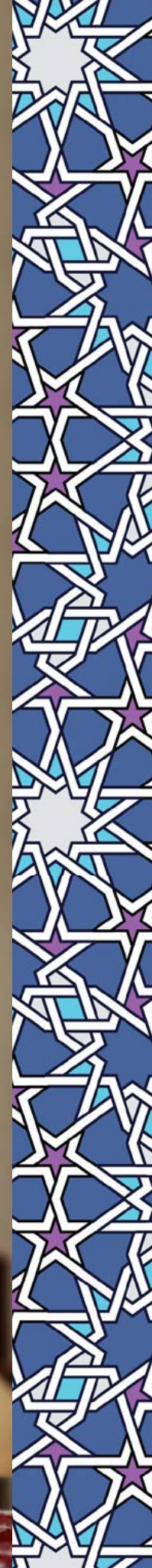




CLASH

To the rear of the residence, where the living areas were, we were again informed that we were not permitted to look inside. But we had no time or inclination to do so anyway, as we wanted to get out of this tense environment as quickly as possible. Once we had closed the last pit, we asked the facility manager where the residence's central cabinet was so we could split up again for the walk and crawl test. Then there suddenly turned out to be a major problem. Here, too, the cabinet was housed in the technical room under the house. But that room also housed the system for the indoor pool. The space could only be accessed via the pool. We still couldn't see what the problem was, but it turned out that the ambassador's wife was swimming with friends – and no way could we walk past the pool right now to get into that technical room. Not even if someone took us there. OK, but we only need to be there for half an hour at most? No, it's not going to happen, absolutely not. We had to wait until

the swimming session finished. How long would that take? Nobody knew, and nobody was going to ask either. We just had to wait until the pool was free before we would be permitted to walk past it. This was somewhere that the Western world clearly clashed with the Eastern world – and we didn't stand a chance. Fortunately money was no object here. The only two options were to either wait until after the swimming session, or leave and come back later. *"Just add it to the bill."* It took an hour or two of waiting. And as it turned out, over a cup of coffee and a cigarette, the bodyguards in the well-cut Italian suits were actually quite good company after all. And we'd learned a good lesson: in the future we would allow two days for maintenance instead of just one. ■



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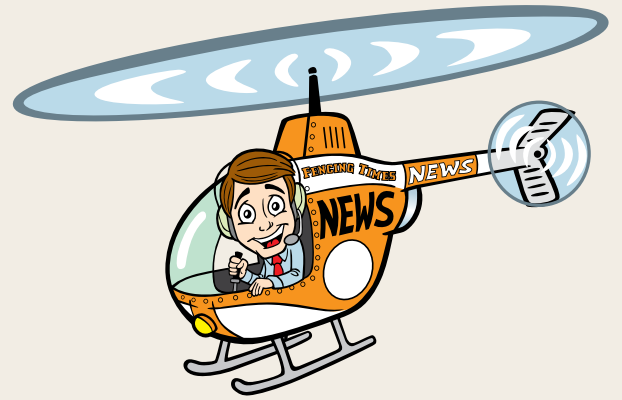


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FENCES IN THE NEWS



Hallstatt builds anti-selfie fence



This spring in Hallstatt, a village in the Austrian state of Upper Austria, the municipality built an anti-selfie fence. But why? The town is on Unesco's World Heritage List, with its traditional houses against a dramatic backdrop of mountains, and the clear waters of Lake Hallstatt in the foreground. These bring lots of tourists to Hallstatt, especially from Southeast Asia.

In 2006 the town was featured in a Korean TV programme, and in 2011 a replica of the town was built in Huizhou in China. Hallstatt also served as the inspiration for the village of Arendelle in the Disney film Frozen. Before Covid, millions of people visited Hallstatt every year – although the town itself has just 750 inhabitants. The pandemic meant that things

were a little quieter for a few years, which for many residents was a breath of fresh air that they hadn't experienced in a long time. It meant that when, this year, tourists returned to the town in large numbers, there was plenty of grumbling. So the mayor had an anti-selfie fence built at the village's busiest selfie spot. This, in turn, was disapproved of by the tourists,

who denounced it on social media. Then that was bad for tourism, so the selfie fence didn't stay up for long. Now the mayor wants to put up a banner asking tourists to be considerate of residents' privacy. We already know how much that will help: not at all. But perhaps it will keep the residents quiet until they're used to mass tourism again. ■

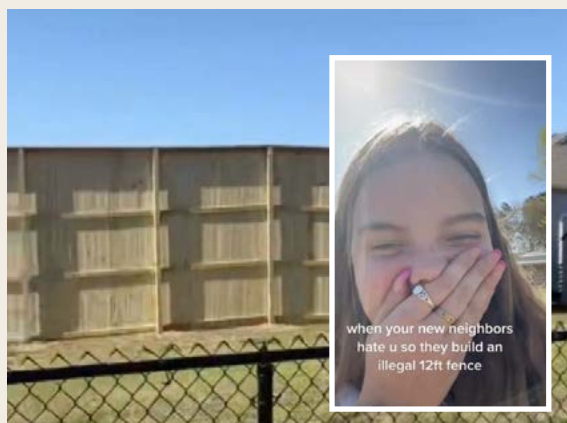
Malaysian boy impales himself on fence

In the town of Shah Alam, a town in Malaysia, a 12-year-old boy impaled himself on the fence around his parents' house. How he managed it is unknown, but several bars from the ornamental railing fence penetrated his posterior. The fire brigade cut away a piece of the fence, after which the boy was taken to hospital and all. There, doctors removed the fence from his backside. ■



TikTokker proud of neighbours' high fence

On TikTok, a social media platform where mainly young people post short videos (usually because they want attention), there's a young woman who's very proud of the fact that her neighbours hate her so much that they put a 12-foot (3.6-metre) fence on the property line. Despite not giving any explanation of why she doesn't get along with her neighbours, she immediately gets a lot of support from her followers. Anyway, an American saying goes: Good Fences, Good Neighbours. Perhaps the relationship between the two will improve now that there's a fence. ■



One dog saves another in San Antonio

In San Antonio, Texas, you'll find the Old Spanish Trails Park. Two stray dogs were enjoying a walk together in that park, until one of them tried to crawl under a fence and ended up getting stuck. The other dog went to find help right away. She ran to the path, where she met former mayor Edward Garza who was also out taking a walk. By barking loudly, running ahead

and looking back, she managed to get Garza to come with her to her friend under the fence. Garza called the animal ambulance and, together with the people from San Antonio's Animal Care Services team, was able to free the poor animal, which was by now exhausted and covered in ant bites. The two dogs were taken to the animal shelter to recover. ■



Man builds fence through neighbour's swimming pool

This story is another one for the category 'Two neighbours had a fight and you'll never guess what happened next'. Well... what happened next is in the title: one neighbour was so fed up with the other neighbour's house, which was on his land, that he built a fence right through it. Um, what? OK then, not through the actual house, but through the garage and the pool. But it's still quite a story.

What's it all about? In 2003 someone purchased two adjoining lots in Delaney Park, a suburb of Orlando, Florida, and built a house there. But a few years later the financial crisis came along and the man was no longer able to pay his mortgage. Or rather mortgages, because he had financed one lot and the house with a loan from Deutsche Bank, while the other block of land had been financed with a loan from a different bank. Or with a direct loan from the previous owner; that part is not entirely clear.

Anyway: the house and one lot was repossessed by Deutsche Bank and the other lot was repossessed by the previous owner, both of whom were now left with an

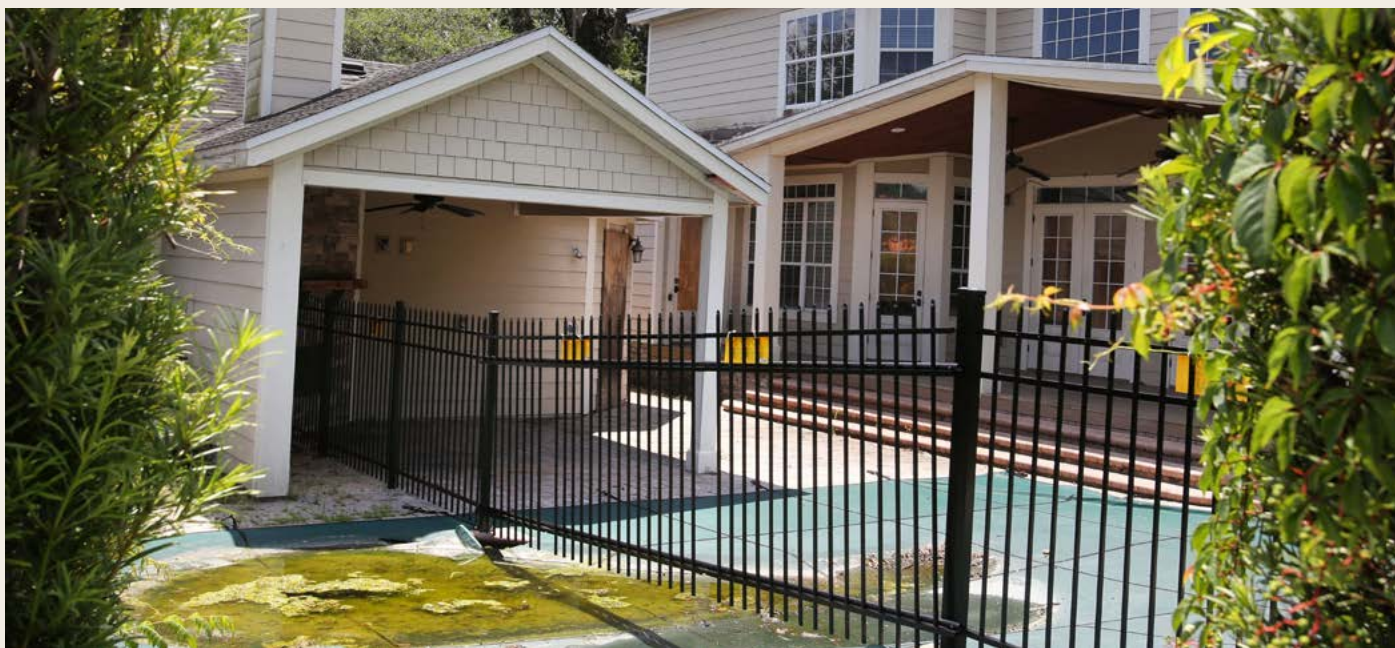
unsaleable property. The bank was unable to sell the house, because part of the house was built on land that it did not own and therefore could not sell along with it. The other owner was left with a block of land where the space that remained was too small to build another house on under Orlando's building code, making it virtually worthless.

The parties made offers to each other for the other lot, but not at a price that was tempting enough for either of them to want to sell. Deutsche Bank eventually (in 2019) sold the lot with the house at auction, to someone who wasn't bothered that the garage and swimming pool were not built on their own land. But when that person wanted to move into the house, he found a fence built through its pool and garage, because the owner of the smaller lot wanted to make a point.

In 2020 Orlando City Council's Zoning Commission got involved. After a lot of sighing, the Commission issued a building permit to the owner of the smaller lot, so at least it would be saleable. Whether it has since been sold is not clear. And it's

also not clear whether the owner of the smaller lot has been compensated by the new owner of the other lot for the land that he can no longer use. According to Google Street View, the second lot is now a basketball court. And according to that same Street View, it looks like someone's living in the house and the fence through the swimming pool is gone.

Apparently the owners have come to an agreement. And of course what we want to know is: In what strange places have you had to install a fence? ■





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