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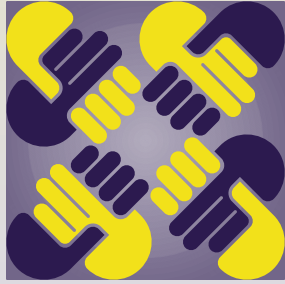
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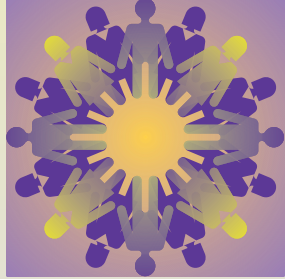
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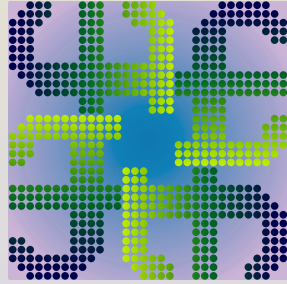
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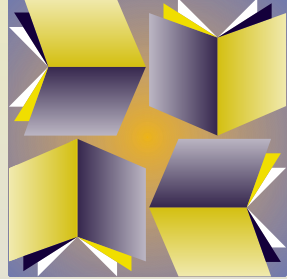
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Kitchen - Perla Bianca worktop and Royal Ivory flooring
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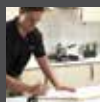
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Spring is in the air (hopefully)!

Welcome to the March edition...

It's a great time of year to start thinking about your next house move, or having a Spring clean, or maybe getting around to those home and garden improvements you've been putting off and off...

We have a wide range of organisations and tradespeople who advertise in here who are all local and keen to take on more work in the area.

Don't forget Mothers' Day on Sunday 31st March – there's loads of lovely restaurants and walks in the area to treat her to - and check out page 6 for some ideas on local events.

Until next month,

Zoe

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

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community events

Quiz Night

Wednesday 27th March

6.30pm - 10pm

West Warwicks Sports

Complex, Olton, Solihull

Arrival from 6.30pm, start time 7pm. £10 entry per team, maximum of 6 people per team. Food and drinks available to purchase on the evening, and prizes to be won. Call 0121 706 3594 to book.

Contact Stephen Yeomans on 01564 778163, Carolyn Abbott on 01564 779898 or Keith Williams on 01564 779445.



Festa Della Mamma Menu at Carluccio's

Sunday 31st March

Carluccio's, Solihull

A glass of Prosecco for each mum at Carluccio's Solihull on Sunday, March 31st. Booking in advance is recommended as they get booked up quickly. To book, please call the restaurant on 0121 704 5215.



Ladies Fashion Show and Pop-up Shop

Saturday 30th March - doors open 1.30pm, show starts 2pm

Knowle Village Hall

Colours fund raising fashion show featuring favourite High Street brands at 50% off or more and a fabulous raffle. Tickets £7, inc. refreshments on arrival, to be purchased in advance.

SPRING SING! Charity Concert

Saturday 13th April 7.30pm

The Core, Solihull

Popular community choir Sing! Bentley Heath's concert features songs from Queen, Abba, Cliff Richard, The Carpenters, The Greatest Showman and The Lion King. This event will raise funds for charity and tickets (in advance only) are £9.50 from Palmers clothes shop on Knowle High Street, or from The Core Box Office - 0121 704 6962. www.singbentleyheath.org.uk

St Mary's Market and Car Boot Sale

Saturday 13th April 10am - 1pm

St Mary's Church, Hobs

Moat, Solihull

Refreshments are available during the day. The cost is £6 per car, no need to book, just turn up on the day. This will then run on the 2nd Saturday of each month until October.

THE CORE LIBRARY

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- **Councillor's Surgery** - these are face-to-face meetings held by councillors for local people to raise issues in their area. First and last Saturday of the month, 10.00am-12.00pm
- **Rhyme Time** - Wednesdays 10.15am to 10.30am, term-time only. A short interactive session for 0-2s that includes finger and action rhymes and songs. Come along and meet up with other parents/carers and discover what the library can offer your child.
- **Meet and Play** - Fridays 10.15am to 11.15am, age 0 - 2 years (term time only. Our new Meet and
- **Play session** offers the chance for young families to meet up, relax, chat, play, sing or make music together! The session is for families, led by families. Toys and musical instruments are provided. For more information contact 0121 704 6965.
- **Homework Club** - Tuesdays 3.45pm to 5.15pm, term time only
- **Silent Reading Cafe** - Held once a month on Thursday evenings, this is a chance to unwind and read in a cosy, informal environment without distractions. It begins with an hour of silent reading from 6pm with a chance to chat (if you want) between 7pm and 7.45pm.

Knowle Fun Run

Sunday 19th May

Entries are now open for May's 36th Knowle Fun Run. Now with a choice of 5k or 10k, runners have no excuse not to get fit for Solihull's longest running Fun Run. Join in for a great community atmosphere on traffic-free streets and help raise funds SoLO Life Opportunities and Sepsis UK Trust with half of all proceeds being retained for local causes; or run for your own cause. Enter online at www.knowlefunrun.org.uk.

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Mould & condensation

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Karen Thomas, Chippenham

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Carol Doyle, Surrey

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Anne Bird, Bristol



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How to beat the Stress Fest!!

It's 19.45 on a Wednesday night and I am tapping away at my laptop, I have been working all day apart from a run to the Co-op and I am still not going to get everything done before my meeting tomorrow. I have grabbed 10 minutes with my children after persuading my lovely Dad to take our youngest to MacDonald's so I don't have to cook!

I can barely stand up because I have been on a crash diet all week so I can fit into a dress for a business dinner I am attending tomorrow night... Why do we put so much pressure on ourselves? We want to be the perfect parent, partner, employee and it is exhausting! Pressure can be positive when it leads to greater creativity but it's a fine line between that and negative impacts on our health. Symptoms of stress come in various guises; anxiety, lack of sleep, depression, eating or drinking disorders and lack of sleep are just a few.

So how can you help reduce stress levels in a week?

Set aside time for yourself.

When you are amidst the fog of stress, that's all you can see. Spend 10 minutes a day to focus on yourself and relax in a quiet space. "Headspace" is a great app that helps focusing on breathing and relaxation.

Respect yourself.

Building self-esteem empowers us to deal with life's challenges far easier. Take 5 minutes before bed to look back on your day and write down in a journal (filling in the blanks):

A quality I liked about myself today is....
Something someone did or said to make me feel good is...
An activity I enjoyed is....

Let Guilt Go and say NO!

Do you find it hard to say "no" when asked for a favour? Practice being assertive and gently saying no if helping someone will make your day more stressful. You are rejecting the request not the person and your stress levels are just as important as anyone else's!

Fun isn't just for kids!

Make a list of what makes you happy, then get each item booked into your diary! This may just be coffee for one, or a walk with a friend - as long as it's fun for you then it should go on the list!

Look after your health.

Tempting though it is to smoke or drink more when we are stressed, these things actually increase stress. Healthy eating, a brisk walk and a good night's sleep within your daily routine can ensure you build resilience.

Well, must go and do some of the above before bedtime! **Have a good month!**



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Mothers' Day Musings

March 31st is Mothers' Day and I wonder if I'm the only mum who finds it irritating?

I mean, I love flowers and chocolates as much as anyone, but I value them more when they come 'just because', rather than because Clinton Cards emailed a prompt. And don't get me started on Primary schools and their 'Mothers' Day mornings. Rearranging my working day so my child won't be disappointed by my absence is stress I don't need...



I thought Mothers' Day was supposed to be about me! My husband is a hands-on dad, who knows how to cook and wield a

vacuum cleaner; but if I didn't remind him about Mothers' Day he'd forget, and so would the kids.

Last year I didn't remind, they forgot, then they all felt bad. So, we had a chat. I told them I knew they loved me, and Mothers' Day wasn't important to me, but perhaps each of them could pick a time when they did something little and nice for me, when I least expected it, and tell me it was for Mothers' Day.

A few weeks later my 12-year-old left a dark chocolate Bounty Bar on my desk one evening with a note that read '**For Mothers' Day** because I know it's your favourite'; and a few weeks after that my nine-year-old drew me the most beautiful picture of a dragon because he knows I like dragons. Somehow those gifts felt more real than any I'd received before.

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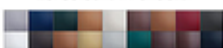
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What the Doctor Ordered

The rise and fall and rise of the Dr.

Marten boot. When you read the words Dr Martens, what do you think of? Skinheads? Clowns? Workmen? Or high fashion?

Because in spite of being associated with all the groups above, Dr Martens have remained one of the most consistently cool items of clothing in the past 50 years.

They really were invented by a doctor too, Dr. Klaus Maertens, **a German army doctor.** He injured his foot while skiing and found standard issue WWII army boots very uncomfortable and not at all conducive to recovery. So, he designed his own shoe, which replaced the leather soul with one which had air-cushioning. Originally the boots were sold as orthopaedic devices and bizarrely the majority of its customers for the first fifteen years were housewives, mainly over forty years old. But then an advert for the boots with the air-cushioned sole caught the eye of the Griggs family, who ran a shoe company in Britain, specialising in sturdy work boots, and they bought the patent.

They made a few tweaks to the design, including reshaping the heel, and they also anglicised the name. The classic yellow-stitched Dr. Martens AirWair boot was launched on April 1st, 1960. The date gave rise to the name 1460. This footwear was no April Fool joke though. The boots quickly became popular with factory workers, postmen and police officers. But these were not the kind of people known for inspiring fashion choices **so how did Dr. Martens become so cool?**



It started with youth sub-cultures, like Mods and Skinheads, who adopted the boots as symbols of working-class pride. There was some irony in the fact that when these groups clashed with police BOTH sides were wearing Dr. Martens! **Pete Townsend of The Who** is generally credited with giving Dr. Martens international exposure, when he chose to wear them on stage at concerts. From about 1966 they began to gain fashion status, generally by groups who associated themselves with anti-establishment values. Punks, Goths, New Wave and Grunge groups all embraced the Dr. Marten, and they gradually became more mainstream with Britpop.

But by the new Millennium sales were dropping. The Dr. Marten 1460 was seen as old. Eventually the company moved production to China. In 2004 a new line of footwear was introduced, deliberately designed to appeal to younger buyers. They were softer, easier to break in and had a translucent heel. This paid off and sales began to climb again. In 2012 Dr. Martens had its best year for sales ever. Shortly after they were sold to the investment firm Permira, and have continued to rise in popularity ever since, becoming a mainstream wardrobe staple.

I wonder what the original Dr. Maertens would make of all that!

COMPETITION



WIN 4 TICKETS

to see Pop Divas Live!

Wednesday 24th April 2pm

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

For your chance to win these tickets, visit the Core Theatre website page for this event - www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk - to find the answer to this question:

What other time do Pop Divas Live! perform on 24th April?

Email your answer to: thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk – and please put 'Pop Divas' as the subject line

Closing date for entries is 31st March. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

About the Show:

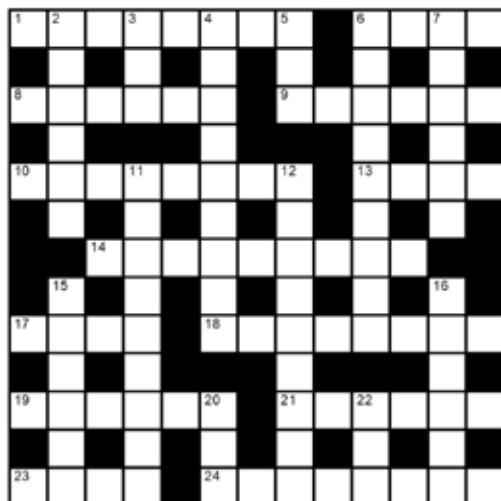
Get ready for the best songs from all your favourite female stars in one fabulous fun-packed show – Pop Divas Live!

Little Mix will cast some Black Magic and Taylor Swift will Shake It Off as four enormously talented girls bring you up close and personal with the greatest female pop performers of today.

Meghan Trainor, Ariana Grande, Beyoncé and Rihanna will all be dropping in to the biggest Pop Party ever, so make sure you're there.

With dazzling choreography, state of the art videos and superb vocals, Pop Divas Live! is the perfect pop concert for the little divas in your life.

crossword



clues

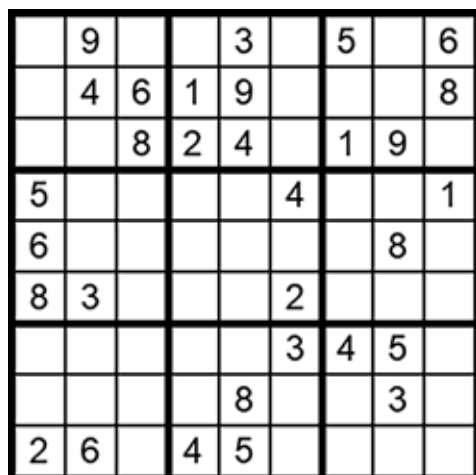
- 1 Judged the value of (8)
- 6 Exclusive, only (4)
- 8 Possible danger (6)
- 9 Clarify, explain (6)
- 10 Shock _____, car part (8)
- 13 Delight, joy (4)
- 14 Paddle-wheel driven river vessel (9)
- 17 100th of a Euro (4)
- 18 Awful, terrible (8)
- 19 Recreational gambling (6)
- 21 Deep purple-blue (6)
- 23 Dowels, pins (4)
- 24 Hotchpotch (8)

Down

- 2 Threadbare (6)
- 3 Period of time (3)
- 4 Decorative cupboard or bureau (9)
- 5 Faulty (3)

- 6 Protect, shelter (9)
- 7 Joined, connected (6)
- 11 Surpasses, exceeds (9)
- 12 Burglaries (9)
- 15 Anaesthetise (6)

- 16 Yeast, mushroom, mildew (6)
- 20 Sticky substance, rosin (3)
- 22 Dike, barrier (3)



how to play sudoku

It's simple!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box, contains the numbers 1 through to 9 with no repetition. You don't need to be a genius. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive.

answers on page 50

Dash Cams

These are special cameras, mounted on a car dashboard to record sounds and images while you're driving. Here are some benefits of having one:

Evidence in case of a car accident - This is the main reason people invest in one. If you're involved in a collision you can prove that it was not your fault by submitting the camera footage as evidence.

Reporting a dangerous driver - Sometimes you see a driver do something so irresponsible that you fear for the safety of other road-users. Reporting that person becomes much easier with evidence.

Extra insurance for parents - We worry when our teens first start to borrow the car that they may not stick to the rules of the road. Knowing that there is a dash cam monitoring their driving behaviour is an extra incentive for them to pay attention.

Prevention of insurance claim scams

- Some drivers purposely cause minor accidents to put the blame on the other party, to extort money. The victim has no way of proving their innocence but a dash cam will at least allow you to prove that you were not at fault.

It keeps an eye on your car while you are not in it - Have you ever returned to your car in a car park to find it's been scratched? A well-installed dash camera can efficiently record such events because most can be set to record even when the car engine isn't running.

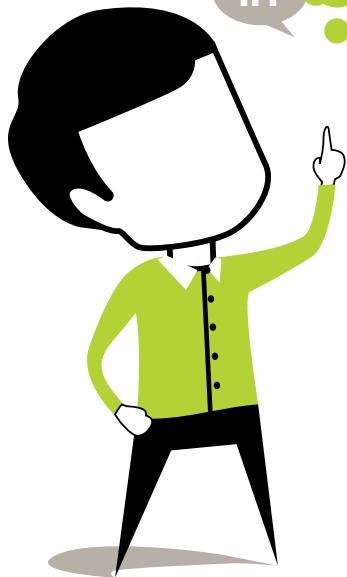


Because the best camera is the one you have with you - It's not all about the car! Check out online videos of dash cams capturing unexpected phenomena. A family of ducks stopping traffic in Birmingham, a plane crashing right in front of a guy driving down a highway, and one Russian car driver's dash camera recorded an enormous meteor that flew over Russia. The clip ended up being viewed millions of times on YouTube!

Dash cams are set to become as necessary an addition to our driving life as sat-navs. **If you don't already have one, perhaps you should think about it.**

By Tom Hancock

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In a Heartbeat

By Louise Addison

What are ectopic beats?

Ectopic heartbeats are extra heartbeats that occur just before a regular beat. Ectopic beats are normal and usually they are not a cause for concern. About 70% of medically normal adults without any symptoms at all have ectopic beats if monitored over 24 hours. They are far less common in children and are more likely to be a result of an underlying heart abnormality in those cases.

There are two types of ectopic beat:

PAC - Premature atrial contractions, which begin in the upper chambers of the heart.

PVC - Premature ventricular contractions, which begin in the lower chambers of the heart.

An ectopic beat might be felt as an extra awareness of the heart beating; a feeling of faintness; a sensation of the heart stopping for a second, or a fluttering sensation in the chest.

The fact that some people become aware of their ectopic beats doesn't automatically mean there is a problem. Most commonly people who become aware of their ectopic beats are also susceptible to anxiety. What tends to happen is that during an episode of anxiety their system is flooded with adrenalin and their heart begins to race. They become aware of their heart racing, and then suddenly they experience a (perfectly normal) ectopic beat, only it feels anything but normal to them because their heart is already racing. They can then become hyper-aware of any perceived differences in rhythm, and this can feed their anxiety.

Most GPs can diagnose ectopic heartbeats from symptoms and by listening with a stethoscope. Sometimes they will arrange a precautionary electrocardiogram (ECG).

If someone is aware of their ectopic beat only when they are sitting quietly, **this is less of a concern** than if the ectopics become noticeable after exercise, such as running upstairs. Ectopics are also of more concern if there is a history of a previous heart attack, or a family of heart disease. A GP will want to rule out complications such as ventricular tachycardia and arrhythmia.

If further investigation is required the GP might order an echocardiogram (heart ultrasound), or a coronary angiography, an MRI, a CT scan, or exercise testing.

In most cases ectopic heartbeats do not require treatment; however, there are certain well-known triggers. It can be helpful to review all medications and their possible interactions, stop smoking, reduce alcohol and caffeine intake, and reduce stress and anxiety as much as possible.

Remember, most ectopic heartbeats are not a cause for concern, but if they are persistent, or you are worried, then **consult your GP**.



Spinach and Ricotta Lasagne

A creamy vegetarian version of this supper classic

Preparation time: 45 mins

Cooking time: 30 mins

Serves: 6-8

Ingredients

Pack lasagne sheets
125g Mozzarella, sliced
30g Parmesan

For the tomato sauce

Olive oil
1 Onion, finely chopped
2 Garlic cloves, crushed
150ml Red wine
2 x 400g Tins chopped tomatoes
1 tsp Sugar
2 tbsp Worcester sauce
2 tbsp Tomato purée
Bunch fresh basil, chopped

For the creamy spinach and ricotta sauce

375g Spinach
Knob of butter
500g Ricotta
250g Mascarpone
4 medium free-range egg yolks
Grated zest 1 lemon
Pinch freshly grated nutmeg
40g Parmesan, grated

Method

Preheat the oven to 200°C/180°C fan/ gas 6. Heat the oil in a medium pan, then fry the onion for 6-8 minutes until soft. Add the garlic and fry for a further minute. Pour in the red wine; turn up the heat and simmer for 3-4 minutes to reduce the liquid by half. Add the tomatoes, sugar, Worcester sauce and tomato purée. Reduce the heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes until thickened. Add the basil, and season well.

Place the spinach in a large pan with a knob of butter. Cover and cook over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes until the spinach has wilted. It will seem to almost disappear! Drain the cooked spinach in a colander and press to squeeze out any excess water. Roughly chop, then mix with the rest of the creamy sauce ingredients. Taste and season well. Spread a little of the spinach and ricotta sauce over the base of the baking dish, then cover with slightly overlapping lasagne sheets. Pour over a third of the remaining white sauce, sprinkle over a little of the grated cheese and top with half the tomato sauce. Cover with another layer of lasagne sheets, top with half the remaining white sauce, then all the remaining tomato sauce. Add the final layer of lasagne sheets, then spread with the rest of the white sauce. Scatter with the remaining grated cheese. Top with mozzarella slices and the grated Parmesan and bake for 30 minutes until golden and bubbling.

Serves: 6-8 people
Preparation and cooking
time: 75 minutes

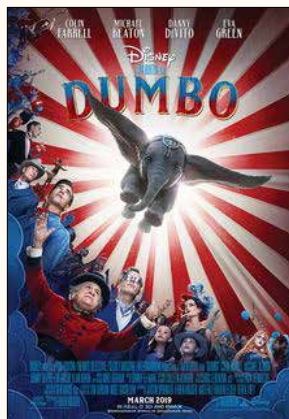


a taste of what's on **March & April...**

CINEMA

Fisherman's Friends from 15th March

A fast-living, cynical London music executive heads to a remote Cornish village on a stag weekend where he's pranked by his boss into trying to sign a group of singing fishermen. As he's drawn deeper into the traditional way of life, he's forced to re-evaluate his own integrity.



To book please visit www.cineworld.co.uk

What Men Want

from 15th March

Ali Davis is a successful sports agent who's constantly boxed out by her male colleagues. When Ali is passed up for a well-deserved promotion, she questions what else she needs to do to succeed in a man's world... until she gains the ability to hear men's thoughts!



THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull
(formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

STARMAN – The Story of David Bowie

29th March

Songs from all eras of David Bowie's celebrated career are performed to perfection in this highly charged show. 'STARMAN' is not only the ultimate tribute to a legend but also a highly entertaining, emotional and thought-provoking musical celebration.



Legally Blonde - The Musical

2nd – 6th April

Based on the hit film, Elle Woods is dumped by her boyfriend as she is

"too Marilyn" for him, as he leaves for Harvard Law School. She sets out to win him back and prove him wrong by getting enrolled too. Along the way she is laughed at and told she is not good enough, but she achieves what she had always been told was impossible.



Planet Dance Goes to the Circus

7th April

This is a family dance show, with children and adults performing all styles of dance, including: acro; ballet; bollywood; contemporary; freestyle; tap; musical theatre; breakin' and street.



To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Dumbo

from 29th March

Circus owner Max enlists Holt, a former circus star, to care for a new-born elephant whose oversized ears make him a laughing stock. But when Holt's children discover that Dumbo can fly, a persuasive entrepreneur and an aerial artist swoop in to make Dumbo a star.

Read Right!

Could your child benefit from a binocular vision exam?

When Sarah's 10-year-old daughter Maisie complained of headaches after school, she booked an eye test. After a 15-minute exam she was told that Maisie did not need any glasses and that there was nothing wrong. But her symptoms remained, and her grades started to suffer. Eventually she was given glasses, but they didn't help.

Sarah's friend advised her to take Maisie to see the optometrist who had helped her son when he had struggled with similar issues.

Optometrists who specialise in what is known as **Behavioural Optometry**, or who run specialist binocular vision clinics, understand that an eye examination should be about more than whether a child can read the bottom line of a chart some distance away. In a classroom eyes need work as a team at all distances.

They should be able to point accurately at the same point on a page, then be able to refocus quickly and accurately on the whiteboard and back again, hundreds of times per day. They need to be able scan across lines of text without drifting off to another line.

If eyes can't work as a team, children might try for a while but often develop unhelpful coping mechanisms like turning their head, screwing their eyes

up, and excessive blinking. Eventually they give up and may become disenfranchised from learning.

Binocular vision examinations measure the ability of the child's eyes to work together, and then the optometrist can make helpful suggestions, such as glasses, or exercises (sometimes called vision therapy), or a mixture of both. Occasionally coloured overlays might prove useful too.

Unfortunately, these types of examination are **not available on the NHS**, but Sarah says that her money was well spent. "Maisie had some new glasses and a short course of exercises. Within weeks her grades had picked up and she was coming home more cheerful and with no headaches. I would recommend that all parents should take their child for a specialist eye examination if they feel something is wrong."

Useful websites: babo.co.uk



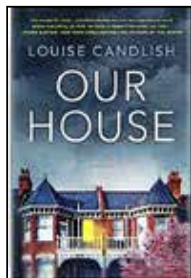
By Kath McLean

a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

Our House

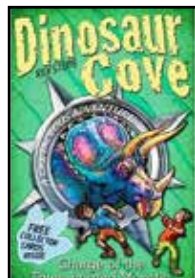
by Louise Candlish



For all of us our homes are the one place we feel safe. It is one of our human rights that no one can enter our home without due cause. For those of us who own our homes then they are also a financial investment and an investment for our children once we are gone. So, what if you came home one day to find a removal van outside your home. And someone else was moving in. This is what happens to Fi Lawson, one sunny winter day in January. There are no signs of her two young sons and her husband, Bram, just a family of strangers insisting that the £1.6 million house in a leafy suburb of London is now theirs. And so Fi's life quickly unravels. This dual narrative novel tells the events leading up to that day from the point of view of both Fi and Bram, switching between their two accounts. At times this can lead to confusion as you forget that you know information from Bram that Fi doesn't, but it is not a big issue. Has Bram cheated Fi out of her home and disappeared from the face of the earth? If he has why? This fast-paced thriller will have you guessing until the end, with twists and revelations throughout and asks if we ever really know what the closest people in our lives are going through?

Dinosaur Cove: Charge of the Three-horned Monster

by Rex Stone



Despite being extinct for 65 million years, dinosaurs still have the power to enthrall young children and this series of books is sure to be popular with young readers who are building up the confidence to read alone. Jamie has recently moved to the south coast of England with his dad and into an old lighthouse with his grandad. Jamie's dad has plans to turn the ground floor of the lighthouse into a Dinosaur Museum as the local area, known as Dinosaur Cove, is rich in Jurassic and Cretaceous fossils. However, what Jamie doesn't expect to find is a hidden entrance to Dinosaur Island where there are real living dinosaurs. In this adventure Jamie and his new friend Tom discover what looks like houses on Dinosaur Island. Knowing people weren't around at the same time as dinosaurs the boys decide to check them out with the help of Wanna, a friendly wannaosaurus. What will they find and how will they get through the huge pack of triceratops! A great read full of facts about dinosaurs means that the reader will learn without even realising!

useful numbers

Health

NHS non-emergency	111
Grove Surgery	0121 705 1105
Northbrook Group Practice	0121 746 5000
Hobs Moat Medical Centre	0121 742 5211
Solihull Hospital	0121 424 2000
Spire Parkway Hospital	0845 850 1451

Council

Solihull Council	0121 704 6000
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Utilities

Electricity power cut	0800 6783 105
Gas leak	0800 111 9999
Severn Trent Water	024 7771 5000
Severn Trent Water (emergencies)	0800 783 4444

Travel

National Rail Enquiries	03457 48 49 50
Network West Midlands (buses)	0345 303 6760

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

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Robert Hulland

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Kate Wild

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kawild@solihull.gov.uk

Councillor surgeries these are face-to-face meetings held by councillors for local people to raise issues in their area. Held at The Core Library, Solihull on the first and last Saturday of the month, 10am – 12 noon.

local police contact for Solihull

Solihull police station

Telephone: 0845 113 5000



Bathrooms

- 17 EH Smith 0121 713 7100
24 Bathrooms Galore 0121 783 9966

Car Services

- 11 Johnsons Cars 0156 4454 081
18 Crossroads Service Station 0156 4703 225
20 AP Alloys 07972 852 758

Carpets

- 22 Wainright's Carpet Cleaning 07748 801658
23 Don Mander 0156 4700 200

Curtains and Blinds

- 9 Soft Options Mill Shop 01564 783 399
16 Tudor Rose 07518 851 063

Conservatory Roofs

- 1 Heart of England 01564 792 900
7 Green Space UK 0800 65 25 157

Doors

- 16 ACS Interior Doors 07592 303104
19 Garolla garage doors 01564 340028

Drives

- 10 Dimension Landscape & Driveways 0121 733 1463
15 Central Drives & Landscapes 07748 577 687

Electricians

- 10 AC Electrical 07960 266271

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- 9 Land Rover Sports & Social Club 0121 742 5490

Fascias & Gutters

- 22 Proline 0800 956 1315

Financial planners

- 1 Jamieson Christie 01676 532 210

Fireplaces

- 14 Woodglow 0121 707 2306

Garden Services

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15 Central Drives & Landscapes 07748 577 687
35 Oakland Group 01564 758 608
45 Earlswood Garden Centre 01564 702314

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Handyman Services

- 13 Prestige Multi-Trades 07886 922 280

Health & Beauty & Wellbeing

- 9 Guru You 07930 147 799
19 Equanimity 0844 693 1282

Kitchens

- 3 Granite Transformations 01926 675 230
5 Dream Doors 0121 314 0956
17 EH Smith 0121 713 7100

Online selling

- 21 ebuygumm www.ebuygumm.co.uk

Roofing

- 12 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276
14 Roofing & guttering services 07956 228 842
40 N Bird & Son 0800 195 6946

1	9	2	7	3	8	5	4	6
3	4	6	1	9	5	7	2	8
7	5	8	2	4	6	1	9	3
5	2	9	8	6	4	3	7	1
6	1	4	3	7	9	2	8	5
8	3	7	5	1	2	9	6	4
9	8	1	6	2	3	4	5	7
4	7	5	9	8	1	6	3	2
2	6	3	4	5	7	8	1	9

Sudoku Solution

from page 27

A	S	S	E	S	S	E	D	S	O	L	E
H	R	I	U	A	I						
H	A	Z	A	R	D	E	F	I	N	E	
								E	K		
A	B	S	O	R	B	E	R		G	L	E
Y	U	O	O	O	U	D					
S	S	R	B	R							F
C	E	N	T								
O	R										N
G	A	M	I	N	G						I
T	P	U	E	A	U						
P	E	G	S								M

Crossword Solution

from page 27



Solution to Mind benders

1. Fair and square
2. Mixed-Up kid
3. Backseat driver

Mindbenders Solution

from page 16

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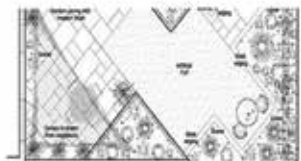
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Gillian Cain, Audi Birmingham, 31 July 2017



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Hardy Annuals

Hardy annuals: the name is an oxymoron. Hardy plants are supposed to be able to survive the winter aren't they, but annuals, by their definition, don't.

In fact, the names hardy, half-hardy and tender, when applied to annuals, refer to the relative cold tolerance of the newly planted seeds.

Hardy annual seeds can handle being frozen in the soil so are **ideal for planting outside**, either in the autumn or now. Productive, adaptable and cheap, they are the ideal credit-crunch plants. They are also easy-to-grow, so are brilliant for beginner gardeners.

For best results sow them as thinly as possible, cover lightly with sifted soil then firm it down. Protect them from cats and birds with netting until the seedlings are well established then thin them out to the distance recommended on the packet. Good flowers for the annual-novice include poppy, calendula, larkspur, fried-egg plants (*limnanthes*), love-in-the-mist, clarkia and cornflowers.

If I could grow only one it would be *Nigella damascena* (love-in-the-mist). It's an old cottage-garden plant and 'Miss Jekyll' is a beautiful, soft, pure blue variety with the added bonus of stripy seed pods once the flowers have faded.

The king of the hardy annuals though has to be the sunflower. Children particularly love to grow them. Sow them singly in small pots or directly into the earth. If you sow them directly, plant two seeds into each hole and thin to one once

they are established. They may need to be staked as they grow. There are some terrific varieties. A favourite of mine is Prado Red, which as the name suggests, produces deep red flowers. If you pinch them out, they'll grow to five feet and produce numerous blooms on each plant. If sunflowers are the kings of the hardy annuals, then **sweet peas are surely the fragrant queens.** Old-fashioned or antique varieties tend to be best for scent though their flowers are slightly smaller. The great thing about sweet peas is that you have to pick them to prolong flowering so you have a wonderful excuse to have a fragrant home all summer long. Sweet peas should be planted a little deeper than other annuals. They are very thirsty flowers. My granddad used to line his sweet pea trenches with lots of wet newspaper. He won prizes for his blooms, so he obviously knew a thing or two about it. Next time you're at the garden centre...walk right on by the showy (and expensive) potted plants and head for the seed section. For a very small outlay you can add colour, shape, interest and completely transform your plot ...**and if you don't like it, you can always change it again next year.**

Happy gardening!



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