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BY GINA LOU

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GINALOUBRIDAL

# Happy New Year

Welcome to the January edition...

And to celebrate the start of a new year we're running 2 competitions this month. Take your pick from a chance to win a **£20 Touchwood voucher**, or **4 tickets to see The PAW Patrol Movie**.

If your new year's resolution is to do more, or try new things, then have a look to see what local events are running – there's comedy, live music, shows - just see what takes your fancy. Or maybe you've challenged yourself to improve or extend your home – if so, there's lots of local businesses who advertise in here who are keen to help.

Here's to a healthy and happy 2022. .



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**[www.solihullindex.com](http://www.solihullindex.com)**



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**Locally designed by:** hotlobster design ltd **Printed by:** Norwood Press

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# community events

## Comedy Night

**21 January**

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Featuring some fantastic talent with headline act Scott Bennett who was crowned Comedy Cellar New Act of the Year 2011, runner-up of English Comedian Of The Year 2014, and Comics' Comic of 2020, after presenting a series of gigs from his garden shed during the Covid lockdown. For tickets visit [skiddle.com](https://www.skiddle.com)

## Jack and the Beanstalk

**23 January**

**Dovehouse Theatre, Kineton  
Green Road, Solihull**

In this year's GIANT pantomime adventure, we join Jack, his mother Dame Trot and brother Silly Billy in the village of Merryhale. Can Jack rescue Jill and save the village from Giant Blunderbore and his evil henchman, Fleshcreep? There's only one way you'll find out! Visit [ticketsource.co.uk](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk) to buy your tickets.



## Midland Vintage & Antique Fair

**5 February**

**Fentham Hall,  
Hampton in Arden**

Family-run fair which is held on the first Saturday of every month. Visit [midland-fairs.co.uk](https://www.midland-fairs.co.uk) for more details.

## George Michael Tribute Night

**12 February**

**Knowle Royal British Legion**

UK's No. 1 George Michael Tribute. Visit [ticketsource.co.uk](https://www.ticketsource.co.uk) for tickets.

## Hi-De-Hi

**31 January – 2 February**

**Core Theatre, Solihull**

Based on the TV show of the same name, all of your favourite characters are there including Jeremy, Gladys, Ted, Spike, Barry, Yvonne and Peggy. It's the start of a new season and founder Joe Maplin announces that he is setting up a camp in the Bahamas and needs female yellowcoats to go and work there. The annual 'Miss Yellowcoat' competition will decide who. Imagine the rivalry! Box Office: 0121 704 6962.



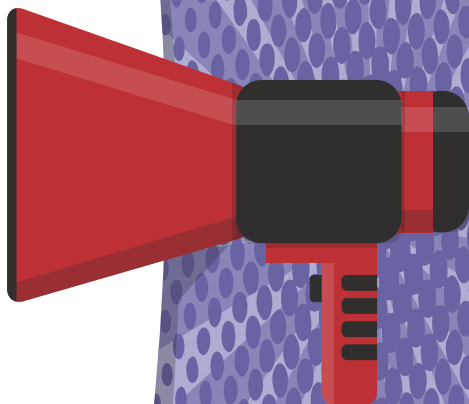
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\*Closing date 31 January 2022. To qualify you must live in B90/91 area, be 18 or over, and have your photo taken for publishing on social media. The voucher will be delivered to the winner by 10 February 2022.



# What's Your Hobby?

## Are you looking for a new hobby for 2022?

We have some great ideas, most of them modest, proving you don't have to spend a fortune to have a hobby.

**Painting** - If you felt that you failed at art when you were at school why not try again as an adult? It's not about aiming to be the next Monet or Picasso (though you never know!), but about learning to express yourself in a no pressure environment.

**Join a Choir** - Now that singing is allowed again the time is right to join a choir. Communal singing is good for reducing stress and improving your health. It also helps to make new friends.

**Try Pottery** - If every you've watched The Great Pottery Throw Down (and if you haven't why not?) and thought 'That looks fun!', now is the perfect time to investigate pottery classes at your local college. It's a tactile, absorbing hobby and you'll get to meet some lovely creative people.

**Start a small veggie garden** - And when I say small I mean really small. If you've never gardened before it can be daunting. So, choose an old garden pot, or measure out one square metre of your plot and choose something interesting to grow, like rainbow chard, or heritage tomatoes. You even get to eat what you grow. As you become more confident add another pot, or another square metre. Baby steps.

**Learn to cook** - If you can't cook, buy a simple instructional book, and get stuck in. Delia Smith's How to Cookbooks are particularly good. They take you through which pots and pans you need and even how to boil an egg. If you can already cook, you could set aside one night a week to try a new recipe. You

might decide to try Mexican recipes, or Indian recipes or regional recipes from around the UK. Get the family involved and have fun with it

**Photography** - We are all photographers now. Every smartphone has a camera. There are evening classes in smartphone photography now. Or maybe you have a nice camera and have never worked out how to use it properly. Taking beautiful pictures is a skill we can all learn and being able to record a beautiful moment: the birth of a child, a special family holiday, or just a sunny afternoon in the garden will make it worth the effort.

**Learn to Sew** - A few years ago I took an evening class called 'Make do and Mend.' It taught simple skills like hemming, mending and minor adjustments. I even made a festive tablecloth! Of course, you might prefer to make clothes from scratch. Creating my own wardrobe is on my bucket list and one day I'll take a class and begin to learn how.



**Take a Walk** - Wherever you live there will be a book of local walks. Discover pocket parks, hidden historical monuments and pretty or interesting views. Better still, find a friend to walk and talk with and explore the area around your home.

**Learn Language but stay close to home** - The UK has some beautiful languages. Choose from British Sign Language (BSL), Welsh or Gaelic. You can attend a class or learn online, or with an app. Duo is a particularly good app for Welsh or Gaelic, and it's completely free. If you prefer in person lessons then most colleges offer evening classes in BSL.

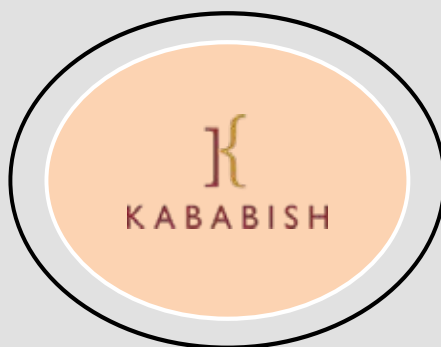
These are some ideas for new hobbies. If nothing here piques your interest, think about what you love to do and then find a class, or a book and get stuck in.





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# Choose a Gym .....

**Y**ou've made it through Christmas but, as usual, you've come out the other side with a few extra pounds around your middle. It's time to don the workout kit and exercise.

But choosing a gym can be a challenging task. What workout regime do you want? Will you feel comfortable? What facilities and equipment should you be using?

The best way to find this out is to book appointments and visit a few. Most gyms will be happy to have a member of staff walk you around the facility, show you what's on offer and explain what other classes and programs there are. As you go round you need to keep an eye open to work out if this is the right place for you.

## **Are the staff friendly and helpful?**

Chat to some of the trainers and fitness team. They should be happy to talk to you about your goals and offer guidance as to what sorts of exercise might work best for you. You should get a feel for their attitude to new members, especially if you've never been a regular gym goer.

Have a think before you go about what sorts of exercise you might like best. If you prefer classes then you'll need to make sure you ask about their timetable. Ask to see where the classes take place and ask about numbers attending. Too few people can mean a class loses the group energy.

If you like pumping iron, make sure the weight area and machines match your skill level. Again, check numbers as you want to be able to use the equipment without having to wait for too long. Are there enough stations? Is there enough room for what you want to do? Is there enough equipment so you're not waiting for someone else to finish with it before you can get going again?



Functional training is becoming more popular now, where you use body weight and movement to build strength and flexibility. If this is your thing make sure the gym has the right equipment for what you want to do. Is there a big enough space set aside for this activity?

## **What sort of people are using the gym?**

If it's full of body builders you might feel out of place if your aim is simply to tone up a little. If the swimming pool is full of people in their seventies swimming slowly and chatting and you like to sprint lengths, you might need to look elsewhere for your workouts. The gym should be somewhere you enjoy going. Having the right mix of people goes a long way to creating that feeling.

After you've seen round the gym think about attending for a couple of sessions before committing to a membership. Many places offer a proper introductory gym session where a trainer will take you through all the equipment and suggest an individualised workout program. Use this session to confirm whether the place is right for you and to jump start your exercise program.

Going to the gym has to be fun. If it's not you will find excuses not to go. Losing weight and getting in shape is all about perseverance. It's hard work but worth it.





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## Dos and Don'ts of social media when going through a divorce

It can be tempting to air our feelings or frustrations on social media when going through a divorce – but remember: this information will be available to a court and could have bearing on any outcome.

**Dipika Mistry**, Legal Director at Shakespeare Martineau in Solihull explains the dos and don'ts...

**DO change your passwords:** Take ownership of any social media accounts, bank accounts, credit cards, music streaming services and change the passwords of your email accounts to ensure your ex-partner does not have access. Even if you know your partner's passwords, do not log into their accounts! Everyone has a right to privacy and unauthorised access to your ex-partner's computer may be breach of the Computer Misuse Act 1990.

**DO check your privacy settings:** Make sure that if you do post, however innocently, only your friends list sees it and you cannot be tagged into any posts without your permission.

**DO turn off location tracking:** It's a 'feature' of more apps than you might realise. This could be embarrassing or hurtful and can provide your ex-partner with your exact location from a stalking / abuse perspective.

**DO follow support organisations:** There are lots of organisations and charities who can offer free guidance and support.

**DON'T bad mouth your ex-partner online:** And remind your friends and family not to post negative comments too. Comments can play a big part in proceedings and if you have children they could read and learn more than you'd like them to.

**DON'T share any personal data about your partner:** As you may breach data protection laws. This includes intimate and sensitive details of the relationship.

**DON'T chat about court proceedings, children or financial information:** By doing so you could be in breach of legislation which could be classed as a serious offence and anything you share can and could be used against you by the other party.

**DON'T post pictures of the children you share:** This comes up time and time again in proceedings. Send any photos directly, not on a public platform, especially if you are aware of your partner's objections to posting pictures online.

**DON'T share a new romance online:** As well as being potentially hurtful, if proceedings have not yet started adultery could be cited as a reason on the petition and have a big effect on any financial settlements and child arrangements.

**DON'T 'stalk' your partner on social media:** Following your ex on social media can be exhausting, upsetting and often fruitless. Give yourself some time to rest and recover.



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answers on page 33


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## Save Energy ...and the planet

There are many simple changes you can make in our homes to reduce your electricity and gas usage and do our bit towards saving the planet.

**Thermostat** - The thermostat is your friend! It's an uncomplicated way to take control of your energy usage. By turning the heating thermostat down by one degree you can save around £60 a year. A smart thermostat can connect to your Wi-Fi so you can control your heating and hot water through your smart phone, tablet, or desktop. A smart meter monitors and displays your energy use in near real-time so you can see exactly how much electricity and/or gas you're using and use the information to make adjustments to cut household costs.

**Lighting** - Buy energy saving lightbulbs. Gradually phase out any incandescent or halogen bulbs in your home. LEDs (Light Emitting Diodes) are the most energy-efficient bulbs available and are

much cheaper to run. Turn lights off in unused rooms. Consider a timer switch to set lamps to come on and off. These plug straight into the wall can be programmable. Did you know that dust sitting on lampshades or bulbs can dim the light in your home? Regularly clean lamp shades or fittings to ensure the light can get through.

**Unblock the radiators** - Items of furniture are often placed in front of radiators which partially blocks heat circulation. Moving furniture just a few centimetres away from radiators can help boost the temperature of your room, which means you may be able to turn your thermostat down and save money, without feeling the temperature difference. Also, many radiators are placed under windows, and are completely covered by full-length curtains when they are drawn, effectively curtailing their ability to heat a room. Hemming curtains to a shorter length can make a massive difference.



# Reasons why people book with Personal Travel Consultants

**In a fast-paced world where we all value time off, spending quality time away is one of the most important things to get right. If you value your time, especially your travel time, then booking holidays or special trips with a Personal Travel Consultant might be worth considering.**

## **Saving you time and stress**

Looking at pictures in brochures, magazines, and on social media is fun, but planning a trip can involve time and often hard work. Especially if it's a multi-generational trip, a group booking, an unusual destination, or a special occasion like a wedding. Spending time researching, shopping around might not always be the best use of your time. A personal travel consultant can do all that for you. Coupled with industry knowledge, connections, and travel experience a travel consultant will save you stress and time, not only in the planning of the trip but across the whole booking experience.

## **They'll help spread the cost of your holiday**

Whether it's a dream honeymoon, last-minute break or family getaway, paying for a high-value holiday can sometimes be daunting. But when booking with a personal travel consultant, you'll get access to a hassle-free option. Once you've got your heart set on a holiday or trip of a lifetime, a direct debit scheme will take care of the rest: being able to spread the cost of a trip in low monthly instalments can make all the difference. There will be an amount agreed to go out on the same date each month, which means you don't need to worry about missed payments and can look forward to your holiday instead. **Bonus reason:** Instead of a remaining balance 14-16 weeks before your holiday, the final payment isn't due until 6 weeks before you travel when you pay via direct debit.

## **They'll have your back if you need an advocate**

Whether it is a natural disaster, bad luck or just bad weather, not every single holiday booking goes to plan, no matter how amazing a travel consultant is.

Whether there are problems getting you out there or getting you back home safe, having a personal travel consultant to help steer around the things we cannot control is proving more valuable than ever before. Having someone at the end of the phone is something customers often say is so important to them.

## **Like any professional, they know holidays best**

A personal travel consultant will give you the inside track to get the most out of your holiday, to make it as memorable as possible. Like any professional, they know their sector best. If you had a broken tap you'd call a plumber to fix it. It's no different in the world of holidays. A Not Just Travel consultant has trained to become a certified travel professional to be able to provide a great service.. They will know it all.

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## **Sabina Clay**

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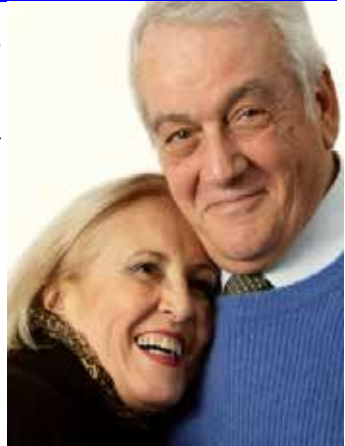
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# Fishing for Benefits

## Why we should all be eating oily fish

**O**ily fish are those that are high in omega-3 fatty acid. This is an essential fatty acid which our body cannot manufacture for itself so has

to obtain from food. Omega-3 fatty acid is a polyunsaturated fat, made up of two main fatty acids - EPA (eicosapentaenoic acid), and DHA (docosahexaenoic acid)

The most common and easily accessible oily fish in the UK are salmon, trout, mackerel, sardines, herring, and anchovies. Unlike salmon, which is oily whether fresh, tinned, or smoked, tuna is classed as an oily fish only when fresh and not when it's tinned, because the canning process reduces the long-chain omega-3 fatty acids to levels similar to those in white fish. Also, tuna contains small amounts of mercury, which is toxic to humans, and we are advised to restrict the amount we

eat. Smoked salmon contains a lot of sodium so is best eaten in small quantities, but the soft bones in tinned salmon are positively beneficial for adding calcium and phosphorous to our diet.

### Eating a diet rich in oily fish has many health benefits.

Protection against heart disease – Numerous scientific studies have shown that omega-3 fatty acid is beneficial for helping to reduce high cholesterol and high blood pressure, two of the greatest predictors for heart disease.

Neuroprotective properties - The DHA in omega-3 fatty acid, is required for proper brain development and function and offers protection against certain neurological conditions such as Alzheimer's Disease.

Joint protection - Omega-3 fatty acid is naturally anti-inflammatory and has been shown in several scientific studies to offer protection of joints and may even help in the prevention of rheumatoid arthritis.

Positive mental health implications - Because depression appears less common in nations where people eat large amounts of oily fish, scientists have conducted studies which suggest that fish oils may prevent or treat depression and other mood disorders. This may be because omega-3s travels easily through the brain cell membrane and may then interact with mood-related molecules inside the brain. Their anti-

inflammatory actions may help relieve depression and anxiety.

Reduces risk of certain cancers - Omega-3 supplementation is widely employed in the treatment of cancer patients as a supplement to the main treatment. Many research

papers since the 1970s have shown links with omega-3 fatty acid and a reduced risk of certain cancers, including colon, breast, and prostate. This is most likely due to the anti-inflammatory effects of EPA and DHA.

The NHS currently recommends that we include at least two portions of fish in our diet a week, one of which should be an oily fish. One portion is about 140g. However, all girls and women who reached menopause age, including those trying for a baby, or who are pregnant or breastfeeding, should have no more than 2 portions of oily fish a week. A portion is around 140g. This is because the low levels of pollutants that oily fish contain can build up in the body and may harm an unborn baby during a future pregnancy.





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# COMPETITION



## Win 4 tickets

to see

### The PAW Patrol Movie

at Solihull's Core Theatre on Thursday 24th February 2pm

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

#### Who's the Director of the movie?

Email your answer to:  
[thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk) – and please put **'Paw Patrol'** as the subject line.

Closing date for entries is **31st January 2022**. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

*Please note there is no cash value nor exchange for this prize so please don't enter if you cannot attend the date shown above.*

#### About the show:

The PAW Patrol is on a roll! When their biggest rival, Humdinger, becomes Mayor of nearby Adventure City and starts wreaking havoc, Ryder and everyone's favourite heroic pups kick into high gear to face the challenge head on.

# Plants as air purifiers

A friend recently asked me whether there are any plants which might help with the humidity and mould problem in the bathroom and back bedroom of her Victorian house. It's a problem that actually affects many British households. Many of our homes are old, and in our damp climate humidity can rise pretty quickly in the winter when all the windows are closed, and the radiators are on. With increased humidity comes the increased risk of mould and associated respiratory problems

Obviously, we can install a dehumidifier or an extractor fan, but nature also provides her own dehumidifiers and air purifiers in the form of certain house plants.

The best houseplants for mould-prone areas are those which are efficient at absorbing moisture through their leaves. Not all plants are equally efficient at this task so I've selected four of the best.

Each offers a different aesthetic so there should be one that's perfect for you.

English ivy is a native plant and it's a low-cost option. It removes airborne mould, but also other toxins such as formaldehyde and benzene. It grows best in bright, indirect sunlight so is perfect for north-facing rooms. You need to keep it out of reach of toddlers and pets because the leaves are toxic.

Peace Lilies remind me of the film *Hot Fuzz*. Sergeant Angel, played by Sean Pegg loved his Peace Lily, and he had good reason. Not only are they elegant plants with stunning white flowers, but research conducted by

NASA found the Peace Lily to be one of the top indoor plants for air purification. This tropical plant breaks down and neutralizes benzene, formaldehyde, and carbon monoxide.

One of the advantages of a Peace Lily is that it tells you when it's thirsty by drooping and that it's getting too much light by turning yellow. They love high humidity areas with indirect sunlight like most bathrooms and are great at preventing mould. Like English ivy the leaves and flowers are toxic.

Palms add a tropical touch to a room

and will efficiently reduce humidity. There are many varieties and some of the best are the lady palm, dwarf palm and reed palm. Indirect light is best and keep the surface of the soil moist but not wet.

The Snake Plant is a wonderfully architectural succulent. Its evergreen sword-shaped leaves grow upright, and almost resemble artificial foliage. It's great at air purification and is one of the few



plants that can convert carbon dioxide into oxygen at night. This quality makes it particularly good for use in a bedroom as it can help regulate healthy airflow. Snake plants can absorb cancer-causing pollutants, including CO<sub>2</sub>, benzene, formaldehyde, xylene, and toluene and act as an effective defence against airborne allergies.

Plants can't solve a full-on damp problem and they won't replace a built-in humidifier or extractor fan. But plants are a great way to improve the quality of the air in your home and they look beautiful too.



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# Personal Electric Transport

Our efforts to be green have been centring around transport recently. The UK is set to ban the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2040. But what about going even greener still with small, personal electric vehicles.

Personal Light Electric Vehicles (PLEV) have been around since the Eighties. The concept was pioneered by Sir Clive Sinclair with his C5. At that time, the vision of personal electric transport was ahead of its time as the technology for batteries and motors could not deliver a truly usable vehicle. But in 2021 electric powered bikes and scooters have now made their way on to our streets and roads.

So, what are your choices and what are you legally allowed to do with these new PLEVs?

E-bikes are the easiest to understand. These are basically bicycles, (so they are not classed as an electric vehicle), with an electric motor and battery bolted on to the frame to provide power assistance to your normal pedalling. Providing your electrically powered bicycle has working pedals, a less than 250 W motor, and a top speed of under 15 mph it still classes as a bicycle. You can ride it on roads, cycle paths and anywhere else a pushbike is legal. You can of course buy more powerful e-bikes, but as soon as you go above these specifications they are classed as a motorbike and you'll need a licence, road tax, insurance, and everything else that goes with it.

An alternative is to go for an electric scooter. You've probably seen these popping up around the country in various rental hire schemes. These are basically stand-up scooters with a

## Going Green on the Roads

battery and motor built into the footplate. With a throttle and brake built onto the handlebars you simply step on and off you go.

But one of the big differences to e-bikes is that electric scooters are actually illegal to ride on UK roads. This may come as a surprise as you've no doubt seen numerous people zipping around towns on rental machines. Scooter law is evolving fast and rental scooters have been given special permission to run on roads while the government analyses their effect on town congestion and traffic usage.

But this special permission is not (yet) extended to privately owned personal electric scooters. These are still classed as electric vehicles which would again mean having tax, insurance, etc. to be legal on the roads. Even then, because they fall into the Personal Light Electric



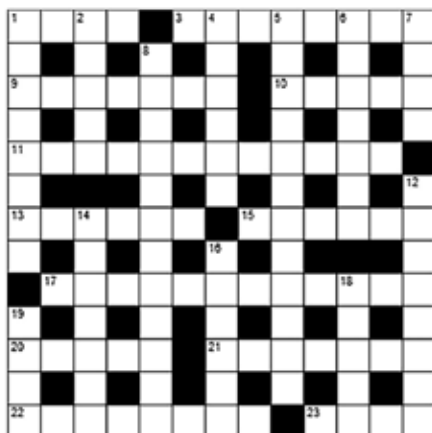
Vehicle category, their low-power and maximum speed mean they can't be used on public roads. This leaves scooters stuck in an inconvenient situation, even if you made them road legal...they wouldn't be road legal!

There is a lot of pressure to change this, but for now if you have a personal electric scooter you are only legally allowed to use it on private land where you have the landowner's permission. Riding a scooter on the road or pavement is breaking the law and you could be prosecuted.

So, before you invest in one of these innovative personal transport solutions do make sure that you are legally allowed to use it to get to where you want to go. With the potential savings in carbon emissions and traffic congestion expect the laws to change quickly over the next few years as we all try to do our bit to save the planet.

# crossword

# clues



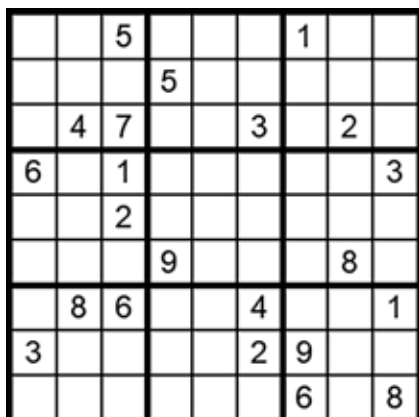
## Across

- 1 Pile, stack (4)
- 3 Large performing arts centre in London (1)
- 9 Introductions, Preambles (4-3)
- 10 Relationship between two numbers (5)
- 11 Paper fasteners (7,5)
- 13 Essence, personality (6)
- 15 Garden tool (6)
- 17 Fungal disease affecting tubers (6,6)
- 20 Halt, break-off (5)
- 21 Scannable mark on merchandise (7)
- 22 Money or property (8)
- 23 European mountain range (4)

## Down

- 1 Recklessly determined (4-4)
- 2 Use or benefit (5)
- 4 Designate, nominate (6)
- 5 Intruder deterrent (7,5)
- 6 Feline foot or to dupe someone (4-3)
- 7 Alcove, crevice (4)
- 8 Day care centre (12)
- 12 Sparkles (8)
- 14 Before time (3, 4)
- 16 Times two (6)
- 18 Bogeyman, fiend (5)
- 19 Baby cow (4)

answer on page 33



## 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.

answer on page 33

# a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

## A Deadly Education

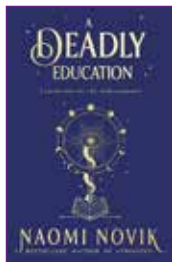
by Naomi Novik

It's no secret that Harry Potter books are read by adults as much as by children. But what if there was a series about a school of magic written especially for adults? Well, that is what Naomi Novik has done. However, it is not wizarding school as you know it.

In this first novel in the Scholomance series we meet El, a student at the Scholomance who is working through her studies, fast approaching graduation. But in this case graduation is not a celebratory event but a fight for survival. As a loner El is in danger. Lone students rarely survive graduation, and her best chance is to find an enclave that will have her. Being born to a Welsh witch she lived most of her childhood in a commune with her mother, away from other sorcerers. This has left her without the support of an enclave, unlike her fellow students such as Orion from the New York enclave. In addition, her penchant for dark magic leaves her isolated from the enclave students.

A school with no teachers or anyone in charge, the students left to fend for themselves, and building up their skills as best they can to fight the malefearia: mana-eating monsters who feed on the students.

Novik is exceptional at transporting you away from this world and into the world she has created. A multi-layered world with a language and natural law system all of its own. It takes a bit of getting used to but is totally worth it.



## Point Blanc: The Graphic Novel

by Anthony Horowitz, Antony

Johnston, Kanako and Yuzuru

For many young readers the name 'Alex Rider' needs no introduction. Like a teenage James Bond, Alex is a spy who works for MI6. Point Blanc was the second Alex Rider novel, and this version follows the same story, but adapted into a graphic novel.

Alex is sent undercover by MI6 to Point Blanc, an exclusive school in the Swiss Alps for the rebellious teenage sons of some of the richest people in the world. Two millionaires have been killed and the only connection between them are that they both had sons attending Point Blanc. Can Alex find some connection that will lead to the motive for the killings?

Full of gadgets, chases, and thrills, the original series of books have been a huge hit with teenage readers. This graphic novel is especially suited for reluctant readers who struggle with large amounts of descriptive text, along with fans of graphic novels in general.





# Buttermilk Pancakes

A tasty breakfast treat



**Makes 12 pancakes**

**Preparation time:** 25 minutes plus standing time

**Cooking time:** 15-20 minutes

## Ingredients

175g Plain flour  
 $\frac{3}{4}$  tbsp caster sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp salt  
 1 tsp bicarbonate of soda  
 1 egg  
 375ml buttermilk  
 3tbsp vegetable oil  
 Serving suggestions  
 Whipping cream  
 Bananas, Blueberries,  
 or raspberries  
 Maple syrup and  
 smoked bacon

## Method

Sift the flour, sugar, and  
 bicarbonate of soda

into a mixing bowl.

Beat the egg lightly into the  
 buttermilk and vegetable  
 oil in a large jug.

Add the wet ingredients to the  
 dry ingredients and beat to a  
 smooth creamy batter. Leave  
 to stand for at least 30 minutes  
 Brush a non-stick frying pan with  
 oil and place over a medium  
 heat. Pour enough batter to  
 make 10cm round pancakes.

Cook for  $1\frac{1}{2}$  – 2 minutes per  
 side. Set aside on a warmed  
 plate covered with a linen cloth  
 until all pancakes are cooked.

## What if you don't have buttermilk?

Creamy, tangy buttermilk  
 lends a beautiful flavour  
 to this recipe but its not an  
 ingredient many of us have  
 lying around. But don't worry,  
 it's incredibly easy to make.  
 Mix 240ml whole milk with 1  
 tbsp white vinegar or lemon  
 juice. Let it sit for five minutes  
 until it's thickened and curdled  
 slightly. Use it one for one in  
 recipes requiring buttermilk.

So, for this recipe use  
 360ml milk with  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tbsp  
 vinegar or lemon juice.

# Kids' Page

The Big Garden BirdWatch takes place this month 28th - 30th January. Can you find all the birds hidden in the letter grid?

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

Blackbird

Blue tit

Collared Dove

DunNock

GoldFinch

Great Tit

House Sparrow

Nuthatch

Pigeon

Robin

Thrush

Wren

Can you recognise the silhouettes of these common UK birds? The first one has been done for you.

PIGEON

DUCK

SWAN

CROW

RED KITE

WREN

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

Bird  
Silhouettes  
1. Red Kite  
2. Wren  
3. Pigeon  
4. Swan  
5. Duck  
6. Crow

Word Grid Solution

# The Perfect Cup of Coffee

**D**o you love a cup of freshly brewed coffee? Me too. But making it is such a faff - coffee grinder, beans, filter, etc. It can get very tedious, especially if you just want a quick shot. So, what about getting rid of all of that hassle with a coffee pod machine?

Coffee pod machines are a great shortcut to great tasting drinks. Simply load a pre packaged pod into the holder, press brew, and let the machine do all the work for you. Recycle the empty pod and sit back to enjoy your drink. No mess, no fuss.

The machine works by having a precisely measured amount of coffee (along with any other flavourings) in a special pod. When you press the brew button the device draws water from its reservoir, heats it, and then pumps it through the pod to

brew the drink. Your coffee is then poured into your cup and frothed on the way.

The contents of the pod dictate what drink you'll get. There are endless options from espresso to latte to hot chocolates and other drinks. Some machines allow you to manually vary how the drink is made, others identify each pod and will run the best program for that particular drink.

Prices vary from around £40 to a couple of hundred depending on what features you want. There are a few different types of pods, and each machine is usually tied to a particular brand, so make sure you check out what's available before you buy. Recycling pods has become a lot easier with initiatives like <https://podback.org/>

So put your feet up and let technology take the strain.



# useful numbers

Shirley Lions Club 0345 833 9547

## 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 0121 704 1451

Daleswood Health, Solihull 01675 489489

## Council

Solihull Council 0121 704 6000

## 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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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





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10 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276  
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21 Enfield Sports 0121 716 1410

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

**Sudoku Solution**

from page 27

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

**crossword Solution**

from page 27

**Solution to Mind benders**

1. Ring of Bright Water
2. Brighton Rock
3. Heidi

**mindbenders**

from page 16

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