

# the solihull index

a community magazine and business directory  
for residents of solihull delivered FREE to 5700 homes

*Merry  
Christmas!*



*a gift for you!*



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BY GINA LOU

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GINALOUBRIDAL

# Get into the Christmas Spirit!

Welcome to the December edition...



Christmas is just around the corner, so let's celebrate! Take the kids for breakfast with **Santa in Solihull** or have a laugh at the **local pantomime at the Core Theatre**. Or if you're in the mood for dancing then check out the **modern jive Christmas Party** - details of all these events, and more, can be found on page 6.

Christmas is a time when we can forget about our to do list and focus on family and the community. But after Christmas if you want to get your home in order, remember all the local tradespeople and businesses in this magazine who are here to help.

Have a very merry Christmas.

Zoe

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

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



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# community events

## Breakfast with Santa

**19 December 10am**  
**The Sharman's Cross**  
**Pub, Solihull**

Enjoy a breakfast with Santa and goody bag for only £6 per person. Places must be booked in advance. Call 0121 733 4871 to book.

## DanceSin Fusion

**18 December**

**Land Rover Social Club 8pm**

Modern Jive – Xmas Party including Xmas Nibbles. Tickets £8 plus booking fee or £10 on the door (if available). Book online at [www.landroversc.co.uk](http://www.landroversc.co.uk)

## Solihull's Festive Feast

**Solihull Town Centre**  
**14-23 December**

Continental Street Market traders will be joining forces with local and regional producers as part of the Festive Feast event. Thursday 16th will be a late-night shopping event with music and roaming entertainment. On Saturday 18th enjoy T-Rex-Mas, a spot of shopping mixed with dinosaurs.

## Football Holiday Camp

**Solihull Moors Foundation,**  
**Solihull Moors Football Club**  
**10am – 3pm: 20-23 & 29-30**  
**December & 3-5 January**

This will be a football camp and drop in social sessions. Our holiday camps are a safe, secure and incredibly fun way for boys and girls aged (5+) to



learn everything about football, during the school holidays. From the basic skills to lessons in tactics, fitness, and healthy eating all from FA/SFA qualified coaches. £10 per child (ages 5-15). Call 0121 705 6770 to book.

## Cinderella Pantomime

**The Core Theatre, Solihull**  
**10 December - 3 January**

Featuring sparkling sets, fabulous frocks, side splitting slapstick and not one, but TWO outrageous dames, this is an unmissable treat for the whole family. The cast and creatives of Cinderella are raring to get going and cannot wait to put a smile on the faces of Solihull audiences

this pantomime season! The clock is ticking so grab your tickets to the ball now! Call the Box Office on 0121 704 6962.

## Strictly Come Dancing

**Utilita Arena, Birmingham**  
**From 20 January**

2022 will see the return of the magnificent Strictly Come Dancing Live Arena Tour. Kicking off in Birmingham on 20 January 2022, a host of the celebs and professional dancers from the BBC One TV series will waltz around the country performing 33 shows in some of the UK's biggest arenas. Book online at [www.skiddle.com](http://www.skiddle.com)





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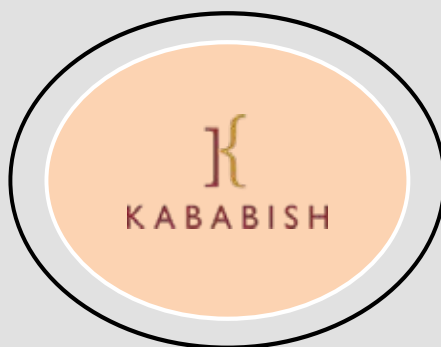
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## Board Games or Bored Games?

There are two types of families; those that love a game of Monopoly, Trivial Pursuit or Scrabble, and families like mine.

Our little festive hearts sink when guests suggest breaking out the Cluedo. We always thought we were odd until a few years ago when we befriended new neighbours. They invited us round for festive drinks and about halfway through the evening they suggested we play some games. They must have seen our collective look of horror. Oh no, they laughed, not BORED games...and with that they whipped out Dobble, Q-Bitz and Genius Square. These were games I had never heard of, although admittedly I hadn't really researched the subject. What ensued were a couple of fast-paced fun-filled hours, which resulted in us buying the same games and few more besides.

That evening our neighbours showed us that we didn't hate board games, we'd just been playing the wrong ones. My family is very kinaesthetic. We like to touch and manipulate things. We have a dozen different Rubik cubes and enjoy solving them. Traditional board games just aren't engaging enough for us.

Q-Bitz is a match-it game, where you race against other players to reproduce the pattern on a card, using sixteen cubes, which all have different pattern-parts on each face. There are speed and memory variations, and children tend to be better than adults...at least in our house.

These three games have become our family staples and we've discovered that lots of our friends prefer them to traditional board games too. So, if you're 'bored with board games' try these and see if they convert you.

# DO YOU HAVE A SPARE ROOM IN YOUR HOME?

**'YOUR HELP CAN ENSURE YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE SOMEWHERE SAFE TO GO'**



**St Basils are recruiting local community members ("Hosts") to provide emergency, short or longer term accommodation and support in their homes to local vulnerable young people.**

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**Visit [www.stbasils.org.uk](http://www.stbasils.org.uk) for more information about the work of St Basils helping homeless and vulnerable young people.**



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# Don't let inheritance tax spoil your Family Christmas

Giving to loved ones is a Christmas tradition that everyone enjoys, whether a shopping voucher or a car; it always adds a bit of extra cheer to the holiday. However, for people who like to splash out on their gifts, inheritance tax (IHT) can put a dampener on things.

**Hannah Tait**, partner at Shakespeare Martineau in Solihull, explains.

## What is IHT?

Quite simply, it is a tax levied on assets acquired through an inheritance or gift.

## What's the tax-free limit for gifts and are any gifts exempt?

Annual lifetime transfers of up to £3,000 can be made each tax year without worrying about inheritance tax. Small gifts of up to £250 can also be made to as many people as you like.

This can be very useful for Christmas! Donations to charity and some gifts in consideration of marriages or civil partnerships are not liable for inheritance tax, depending on how closely related a person is to the happy couple. Gifts of £5,000, for example, can be made by a parent and £2,500 can be made by a grandparent. All gifts between married couples or those in civil partnerships are generally also exempt, although it is important that domicile is considered here.

## What's the seven-year-rule?

Most gifts will initially be considered as 'potentially exempt transfers'. These become totally exempt when the donor has survived seven years from the date of the gift.

If you die within seven years of the potentially exempt transfer, the value eats into your Nil Rate Band (currently £325k per person), thus reducing or even eliminating the amount that can be passed to your beneficiaries without IHT implications.

## Is there a way to avoid IHT for certain?

No one can predict how long someone will live. However, early planning is recommended and it is always important to consider the capital gains tax implications of any gift as well as the IHT position. One often overlooked option for IHT is the 'normal expenditure out of income' exemption. If a person can prove their income meets all their living costs, and that their standard of living can be maintained after the gift has been made, then it may be possible to claim this exemption for IHT. To qualify, there must be a regular pattern to this gifting and maintaining records is crucial for the claiming of this very useful exemption. People often use this for the payment of school fees.



**Want help with your estate planning? For a free consultation call 0330 024 0333  
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answers on page 41

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## Clutter-free for Christmas

<https://helpforhoarders.co.uk/>

Look around your house. Would you be able to invite people in without a second thought? Or would unexpected festive visitors send you into a panic? It's easy to feel overwhelmed by clutter but follow these simple 'no extra mess steps' and you'll soon be ready to open the front door with a smile. Grab a bin bag. Go quickly through the house from room to room and put in anything that is obviously just rubbish: empty packets, wrappers, junk mail etc. Once you've done it, go through again and see whether you've missed anything. The chances are that going through the first time has opened your eyes to other things which can just be thrown away. Now do any washing-up or load the dishwasher. Clearing the kitchen surfaces makes a huge difference.

Grab another bag. Go through the house again and this time look for items of clothing that need to be washed. Pop them in the bag

and take them to the washing baskets. Take a couple of empty and go through yet again, this time looking for items that are easy charity shop donations - things you won't need or use again so don't want to waste time finding a home for, but which are too good to throw away. These might be old toys and games, CDs, DVDs, books, extra pots and pans etc. By now things will be looking much tidier. At this point grab another box and go through one last time and look for things that are obviously out of place but which you know have a home. Put them in the box and rehome them as you go round the house. Then do the washing and drying, and fold and put away the items.

Hopefully by now you should feel more in control of your surroundings and will be able to see a way forward. Obviously if your clutter is such a big problem that you are still overwhelmed speak to your doctor about seeking professional help.



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**Sailing Dates:** May

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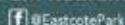
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## What to buy a Vegan!

Look around your house. Would you be able to invite people in without a second thought? Or would unexpected festive visitors send you into a panic? It's easy to feel overwhelmed by clutter but follow these simple 'no extra mess steps' and you'll soon be ready to open the front door with a smile. Grab a bin bag. Go quickly through the house from room to room and put in anything that is obviously just rubbish: empty packets, wrappers, junk mail etc. Once you've done it, go through again and see whether you've missed anything. The chances are that going through the first time has opened your eyes to other things which can just be thrown away. Now do any washing-up or load the dishwasher. Clearing the kitchen surfaces makes a huge difference.

Grab another bag. Go through the house again and this time look for items of clothing that need to be washed. Pop them in the bag

### How do you know whether someone is a vegan?

and take them to the washing baskets. Take a couple of empty and go through yet again, this time looking for items that are easy charity shop donations - things you won't need or use again so don't want to waste time finding a home for, but which are too good to throw away. These might be old toys and games, CDs, DVDs, books, extra pots and pans etc. By now things will be looking much tidier. At this point grab another box and go through one last time and look for things that are obviously out of place but which you know have a home. Put them in the box and rehome them as you go round the house. Then do the washing and drying, and fold and put away the items.

Hopefully by now you should feel more in control of your surroundings and will be able to see a way forward. Obviously if your clutter is such a big problem that you are still overwhelmed speak to your doctor about seeking professional help.



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# COMPETITION



## Win 2 tickets

to see

### Great Balls of Fire!

at Solihull's Core Theatre on **Thursday 10th February**

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 special guest?

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

Closing date for entries is **10th 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 show features the incredible 'Darren Green' From the hit show 'Rockin' on Heaven's door and his smoking hot Piano performing the hits of rock and roll legend 'Jerry Lee Lewis.' The Class of 55 will be 'Ripping' through the great rock and roll songbook. From the raw sound of the young man known as 'The Killer' to the more sophisticated songs of the '90s, this carousel of tunes from the past is sure to get you dancing in your seats with songs from the last century. If you love Rock and Roll, you are going to love 'Great Balls of Fire'

# Simple winter tasks

This year's festive season (at least at time of writing), is shaping up to be a little more 'normal', whatever that term now means. While most of us are looking forward to more socialising and togetherness, I'm betting a fair few might think back fondly to last year's smaller, quieter Christmas. And this is where the garden comes into its own. There are always things to do out there, even in December. A few simple gardening tasks offer some pockets of calm and relief amid the busyness of the festive season. They are also a wonderful way to get some fresh air and exercise to burn off those Christmas calories and winter gloominess!

First, take a look at your winter containers. If you have a particularly wet spell, make sure they don't get flooded. If it's dry, then plants will still need water regularly, just give the compost a chance to dry out each time. Pick off any leaves that look yellowed or diseased.

Do you like garlic? I love it. Now is the perfect time to start your own garlic crop, especially if like mine your soil is free-draining. Plant individual cloves of garlic. 'Solent Wight' is a great variety for our greyer British climate and forms large plump bulbs. If you have a sheltered warmer spot try 'Lautrec Wight,' which as its name suggests originates from the town of Lautrec in France. It produces particularly handsome pink/purple cloves and is widely regarded in France as the best garlic. Snip off any wispy ends or the birds will pull cloves from the soil (I learned that one from experience!). The bulbs will be ready to harvest when the leaves start to die off and turn yellow, which is usually around June or July.

Tidy established perennials by cutting back those that have become pulpy. Simply cut back the decaying material, chop it up and add it to the compost heap.



If you have an unheated greenhouse, a summer house or conservatory you can sow some sweet peas and leave them to germinate. Sow the seeds in deep pots or root-trainers filled with multi-purpose compost then keep the pots in a propagator or cover them with a transparent plastic bag. Once seeds have germinated, remove the covering.

If the soil isn't frozen, you can plant bare-root fruit bushes such as gooseberries, raspberries, and blackberries. Make sure you dig a hole that can take the plant's roots comfortably without squashing them. Then label them clearly because it's easy to forget which varieties you're growing!

Finally, if you're looking for the perfect gift for the gardener in your life please can I recommend Gold Leaf Winter Touch gloves. They have a Thinsulate™ thermal lining which keeps hands toasty warm even in the coldest weather, AND an additional Ski-Dri™ waterproof, breathable lining so your hands remain dry even when used in the wet! I also love the reinforced palm because it's great for spade work. As you can tell, I love mine, and I am neither sponsored by nor connected with the company in any way; mine were a recent gift and I've been raving about them to anyone who will listen ever since!



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# Freezer Meat Mastery

## How to freeze meat

Like many people I clear out my freezer in the run up to Christmas to make room for all the festive goodies. And like many people (please tell me it's not just me) I often end up looking at freezer bags or boxes dated several months previously wondering, 'Is this still safe to use?'

It's convenient to fill up our freezers with frozen meals and ingredients, since freezing food is the best way to guarantee freshness, but how long can we freeze meat before it goes off?

Well, the good news is that if your freezer is set to -18C (which is the recommended safe freezer temperature) then frozen meat is actually safe to eat pretty much indefinitely, because this temperature prevents the growth of microorganisms and inactivates any microbes (such as bacteria, yeasts, and moulds). But safe to eat definitely does not equate to 'good to eat'. Meat that's been in the freezer for a long time will begin to degrade and suffer from freezer burn.

It's safe to freeze meats in its original packaging; but if you plan to keep it in your freezer for longer than two months it's good to overwrap the packaging with airtight heavy-duty packaging such as foil, cling film, freezer paper, or a freezer bag.

**Poultry** - Whole chickens and turkeys can last in the freezer for 12 months and still taste good. Chicken pieces should be consumed within 9 months, and giblets for just three months.

**Beef, Veal, & Lamb** - Steaks should be consumed within 8 months. Chops, which are on the bone deteriorate faster and should be eaten within 6 months.

**Pork** - Uncooked pork is similar to beef. Chops will last four to six months in the freezer. Sausages will last about four months and



bacon will be fine for about six months.

**Fish & Seafood** - Fish and seafood has a much shorter freezer life. Generally, two to three months is recommended for fish, three months for raw prawns and four months for cooked prawns (which have been bought frozen).

**Mince** - I was quite surprised by the fact that the quality of mince deteriorates pretty rapidly in the freezer and shouldn't really be kept beyond four months.

**Cooked & Leftover Meat** - Cooked meat doesn't maintain its quality in the freezer for as long as raw meat does. Poultry and fish dishes will keep for 4-6 months. Beef, veal, lamb, and pork dishes should only be kept for 2-3 months.

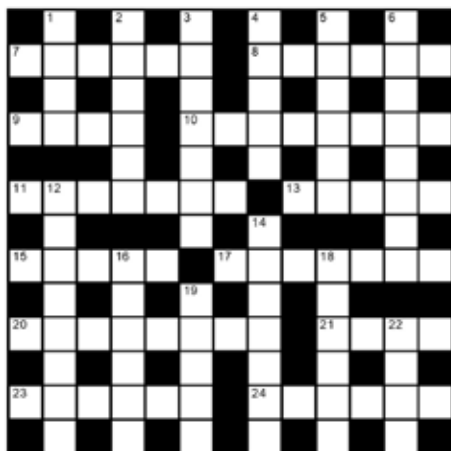
Things you might not know you can freeze safely

**Eggs!** - Break the eggs into silicone muffin cups and they will stay fresh for up to four months, though you can keep them for 12 months.

**Nuts** - If you love nuts it's cheaper to buy them in bigger bags. But because of their high fat content they can go rancid. So, freeze them in small portions and they will last for 6 months.

Happy Freezing this festive season.

## crossword



## clues

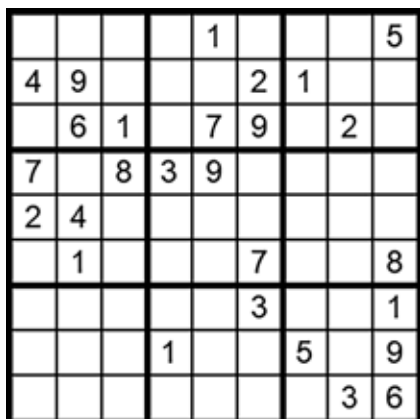
## Across

- 7 Destitute, lacking (6)  
 8 Allowing movement in a single direction (3-3)  
 9 False god (4)  
 10 Towards the back, at the end (8)  
 11 Major road (7)  
 13 Local authority regulation (5)  
 15 Cow's mammary gland (5)  
 17 Having taste, genteel (7)  
 20 Computer ID (8)  
 21 Adorable, charming (4)  
 23 Tearful (6)  
 24 Reach, realise (6)

## Down

- 1 Desire, covet (4)  
 2 Riches (6)  
 3 Abiding, immortal (7)  
 4 Articulate (5)  
 5 Room to move and grow (6)  
 6 Bearing, stance (8)  
 12 Commerce, trade (8)  
 14 A few, not many (7)  
 16 Insect with pincers (6)  
 18 Encourage, foment (6)  
 19 Assess, quantify (5)  
 22 Offshoot (4)

answer on page 41



## 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 41



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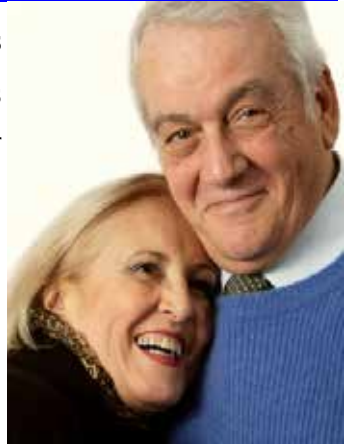
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# The Art of Scepticism

## How to think critically



Over a year after the losing the US presidential election Donald Trump still maintains he won - by a 'landslide'. Even after multiple recounts, audits and 'forensic'

testing all proved him wrong. But why do tens of millions of Americans still think he's telling the truth?

Critical thinking and scepticism are dying skills. You read a post on Twitter and because other people agree with it you assume it's true. We don't ask the important questions. Who made the initial post? What expertise do they have? What facts do they have to back up their claims? Where do those facts come from? Can they be trusted? Do they have something to gain?

Without applying some critical thought, we end up falling down the rabbit hole and starting to believe all sorts of nonsensical conspiracy theories from the Earth being flat (yes, there is a growing Flat Earth movement), all the way up to the world being run by an elite race of child eating vampires (the basic QAnon premise!!).

So how do you combat the deluge of misinformation, misunderstanding and barefaced lies surrounding us in today's permanently connected life?



Use Carl Sagan's Baloney Detector.

Carl Sagan was a leading scientist, philosopher and astronomer who saw how society was losing touch with reality in the 80's and 90's. He predicted our current situation and tried hard to combat the rejection of facts and truths.

The baloney (or BS) detector is a set of rules you should follow to validate any argument people present to you. There are a number of steps, but I'll take you through the main ones you should apply to claims you hear.

1. Check the facts There must be facts to back up the claim. These must be independently confirmed by a trusted source.
2. Don't trust someone just because they are in authority.
3. Explore other explanations. Can you disprove them? Explanations that survive disproof stand a better chance of being correct.
4. Don't believe something just because you like the sound of it.
5. If something can be measured, measure it, or get reliable data from an expert source.
6. If one argument relies on another and another, they all must work or the whole chain fails.
7. Occam's Razor - if two arguments work, the simplest is usually the best.
8. Can you falsify the argument? If there's no possible way you can test an argument to see if it's true, it's not a good argument.

So, when you next read about aliens from Jupiter replacing members of the Government with robot clones, think to yourself. Is this true? How many have been replaced? Can we test this theory? Who is saying this? Can they be trusted? Is this the likeliest explanation?

I leave you to ponder that one!



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# Drying to be Environmentally Friendly

## Which tumble drier should you choose?

I try to be eco-friendly. I make only intentional purchases, recycle, repurpose, and use a washing line rather than a tumble dryer as much as possible. But when it's drizzling and cold outside and there are two loads of washing to dry, a tumble dryer is sometimes the only reasonable option.

Our ancient tumble dryer died recently. It was fifteen years old so lasted way beyond our expectations, but now we were in the market for a new one. Eco-friendliness was top of the agenda. No tumble drier is actually eco-friendly, but I wanted one that at least wasn't openly hostile for the days when line-drying wasn't an option.

There are two types of tumble dryer: condenser and vented. Condensers work by separating moisture from the air and storing it in a water container. The container needs to be

emptied after each cycle. Vented models have a large hose designed to transfer the moist air outside. While this saves you emptying a container, it may require some installation if you want to vent it through a wall.

Bigger drums provide more room for clothes to tumble, allowing for thorough drying and fewer creases. Drum capacity is measured in kilograms. If you want to dry substantial amounts of clothes, look at models above 9kg.

Tumble dryers with sensors work out the ideal drying time for clothes. They remove the guesswork by automatically assessing the weight and moisture levels in the clothes. The machine then calculates how long the cycle should be, saving energy and money. And, because it knows when to stop, it prevents

damage to clothes caused by over-drying.

Tumble dryer energy ratings range from A+++ which is super-efficient, to D which... erm... isn't. Even current models are not always terribly environmentally friendly. The most energy efficient models use a heat pump.

A heat pump tumble dryer absorbs the water from the wet laundry by passing hot air through the drum. This air is then passed through an evaporator which removes the water and stores it in the tumble dryers' reservoir. The air is then reheated and sent back through the drum

multiple times until your laundry is dry.

This is different to normal vented and condenser tumble dryers, as neither of those models take advantage of the air they have already warmed. So, heat pump tumble dryers use up to 50% less energy as they are reheating the air which is already warm from the previous cycle.

This means they are better for the environment. Also, because heat pump tumble dryers operate at a lower temperature, clothes last longer, which is also an eco-win.

The two disadvantages are price, and a longer running time. Costs have fallen recently but they are still more expensive than conventional driers. The longer running time is because of the lower running temperatures.

We thought about it carefully and on balance felt that with energy prices set to keep rising, it was better to invest a little extra cash up front when buying our new tumble dryer rather than paying extra to use it over the long term.

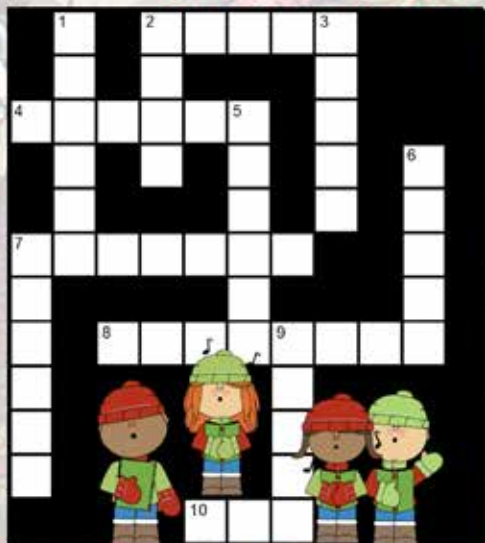
If you don't have to replace your drier immediately it might be worth waiting a little longer to see whether prices drop any more as heat pump models become more the norm.





# Kids' Page

## CHRISTMAS CAROL CROSSWORD



Across

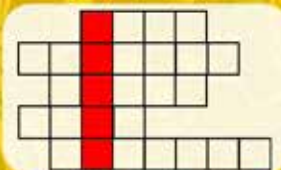
- 2 O Holy \_\_\_\_\_ (5)  
 4 Hark! The Herald \_\_\_\_\_ Sing. (6)  
 7 Little \_\_\_\_\_ Boy (7)  
 8 O Come All Ye \_\_\_\_\_ (8)  
 10 \_\_\_\_\_ to the World (3)

Down

- 1 Away in a \_\_\_\_\_ (6)  
 2 The First \_\_\_\_\_ (4)  
 3 We \_\_\_\_\_ Kings (5)  
 5 \_\_\_\_\_ Night (6)  
 6 Once in \_\_\_\_\_ David's City (5)  
 7 Little \_\_\_\_\_ (6)  
 9 The \_\_\_\_\_ and the Ivy (5)

### Christmas Word Grid

Solve the Christmas Clues to fill the grid. The shaded row spells the name of a welcome festive visitor.



- The three wise men followed one.
- Pull one to make a BANG!
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Gabriel.
- You might receive one at Christmas
- We hang them on the tree.

Hidden word - SANTA

BAUBLES  
 GIFT  
 ANGEL  
 CRACKER  
 STAR

Christmas Word Grid Solution

Q: In what year does New Year's Day come before Christmas?  
 A: EVERY year!



Christmas Carol Crossword



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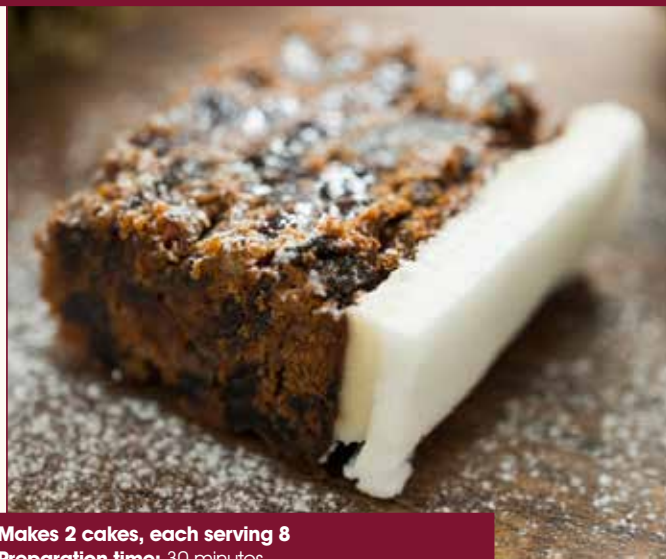
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# Last-minute Christmas Gift Cake

Traditionally Christmas cakes are made well in advance but if you haven't had time try our last-minute version. Because it makes two you can also give one away as a gift, and solve two problems with one recipe!



**Makes 2 cakes, each serving 8**

**Preparation time:** 30 minutes

**Cooking time:** 1-1¼ hours depending on oven.

## Ingredients

600g good-quality mixed dried fruits  
150ml whisky, warmed  
150g stem ginger, drained, plus  
8 tbsp ginger syrup from the jar  
200g butter, softened, plus extra for greasing  
300g plain flour  
2 tsp baking powder  
2 tsp mixed spice  
200g soft light brown sugar  
4 large free-range eggs  
2 tbsp milk  
Finely grated zest of 2 small oranges and 2 lemons  
50g ground almonds

150g whole glacé cherries

## Method

Put the dried fruits in a bowl and pour over the whisky. Set aside for 30 minutes to allow the fruit to plump up.

Briefly blend the ginger and its syrup in a mini food processor until finely chopped. Preheat the oven to 160°C/fan140°C/gas 3.

Grease and line a 20cm square cake tin. Sift the flour, baking powder and mixed spice into a large

bowl and add the rest of the ingredients except the cherries. Beat with a hand-held electric whisk for 2 minutes until pale and fluffy. Fold in the soaked dried fruits and any whisky, the blitzed ginger and the cherries.

Spoon into the baking tin and level off. Bake for 1-1¼ hours (this depends very much on your oven. My fan oven is super-quick whereas my mother's aga is slower). If you're unsure I recommend you check after an hour then every fifteen minutes after that, until the cake is firm and golden brown. To check, insert a skewer into the centre of the cake.

If it comes out clean the cake is cooked. You can cover it loosely with foil after 1 hour if the centre needs more time. This prevents the surface darkening too much. Leave in the tin for 10 minutes, and then remove to a wire rack to cool.

Remove a thin slice from all sides of the cake and discard. Cut the cake in half to make 2 rectangles.

Top with marzipan and white fondant icing and decorate with a sprig of holly.



# #atton



## CHRISTMAS ALL WRAPPED UP

Whether it's shopping for those special gifts at our beautiful **Shopping Village**, bringing Christmas to life for your little ones at the **Enchanted Christmas Kingdom**, or celebrating with family, friends & colleagues with a festive fine dining experience at the **Hatton Arms** or an **Escape Room** adventure, Hatton really does have **Christmas all Wrapped Up**.

### Hatton Shopping Village

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Our myriad of independent shops offer an array of choice; exquisite **jewellery** hand crafted on site; **vintage** one offs; **homeware**; **toys**; **ladies fashion** and **childrens wear**; **bikes**; **garden supplies**; treat yourself at the **hair & beauty salons**; celebrate with friends with a **Gin School Experience** the list goes on... And of course there are delicious cafés where you can stop and refuel. **Christmas Shopping as it Should be.**

### Christmas Markets

Plus every weekend until the 19<sup>th</sup> December there is a Christmas fayre or market at **Hatton Shopping Village** - and the festive atmosphere really takes off. Visit our website to see all upcoming events.

### Enchanted Christmas Kingdom

Next to Hatton Shopping Village lies the **Enchanted Christmas Kingdom** within Hatton Adventure World. Open every weekend and then every day from 18<sup>th</sup> December right up to Christmas Eve. Packed full of festive fun for the whole family.

### Christmas Celebrations at the Hatton Arms

With **Christmas Parties** from only £23.95, bring Christmas cheer to your friends, family & colleagues. Relax by the fire and enjoy some festive spirits... with our **Festive Cocktails** and **Mulled Wine**.

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# CHRISTMAS ALL WRAPPED UP AT HATTON

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**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

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**Solution to Mind benders**

- Swim under water
- This way up
- Where's there's a will there's a way.

**mindbenders**

from page 16

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

**Sudoku Solution**

from page 27

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

**crossword Solution**

from page 27

# a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

**Christmas is a wonderful time to curl up with a book. The shelves are full of this year's new and shiny celebrity offerings. But Christmas is surely a time for nostalgia. So, pour yourself a glass of eggnog or mulled wine and let's visit Christmas Past...**

## For Grown-Ups

For a real nostalgia-fest and a lyrical description of times gone by, when 'December was as white as Lapland though there were no reindeers'? dig out 'A Child's Christmas in Wales' by Dylan Thomas, preferably with Edward Ardizzone's illustrations. Short, simple, and beautiful, it sums up Christmas with the Uncles, snow on the ground and the myriad delights for a small boy on the best day of the year.

If, however, you are feeling slightly less full of cheer and goodwill, Jilly Cooper might be more to your taste. The Christmas scene in 'Appassionata' is one of my favourite depictions of the holiday, and every December I find myself turning first to 'How to Survive Christmas' – bleak, witty and sometimes crushingly accurate, it is Cooper's account of how to get through a typical festive season.

Another excellent book with a brief but memorable Christmas sequence, is 'Angels and Men' by Catherine Fox. It is hard to get hold of, but I promise you, Mara's Christmas with her grandmother is not one you will forget – and the rest of the book is beautifully written, too.

Finally, from the realms of fantasy, why not try Christmas Discworld style in 'Hogfather' by Terry Pratchett? Was there ever a writer with a sharper wit? As you might expect, his Santa is quite different – for a start, those are pigs, not reindeer pulling his sleigh. And he seems a little on the bony side. What does Death have to do with Christmas? More than you might think....

## For Kids

For many people, 'The Snowman' by Raymond Briggs is their Christmas classic of choice. I actually prefer his 'Father Christmas.' Less saccharine and eloquently

told with pictures and few words, it follows a curmudgeonly Santa on his journey around the globe, dropping off presents, struggling down chimneys, trudging upstairs, through all kinds of weather...Merry Bloomin' Christmas!

Another favourite is 'Dear Father Christmas' by Jeanne Willis and Rosie Reeve. This picture book follows Mary as she writes her Christmas letter. Her wishes are different, as she doesn't need any more toys – but an everlasting hamster and self-tying shoelaces would come in rather handy. Of course, there is a twist in the tale, but we don't see it coming, and my kids read it over and over again – even at the height of summer.

If you like the Jolly Postman, then you will love 'The Jolly Christmas Postman' by Janet and Allan Ahlberg. As you might expect, there are a range of letters to open, with cards, games and even a jigsaw puzzle for the lucky nursery rhyme characters on his rounds. An absolute delight.

And finally...

How could we look at Christmas without mentioning the two biggest Christmas classics ever? I mean of course, 'A Christmas Carol' by Charles Dickens and 'The Night Before Christmas' by Clement C Moore. I know you have seen a million and one adaptations of the former (The Muppets do it best!), but the book really is worth a read. Be honest, when else are you going to curl up by the fire with a Dickens novel if not during a long snowy holiday? Try it. As for the former, we read it aloud every Christmas Eve, just before the lights go out. I stole this tradition from a friend, and I am passing it on to you.

Merry Christmas!



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