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Wishing you all a very happy 2023

Welcome to the January edition.

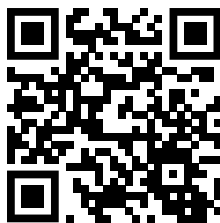
Here's hoping you've survived the mayhem of Christmas and are ready for a healthy and happy 2023.

If your aim is to get fitter this year then look out for our competition to win a 3 month leisure club membership. Or if your goal is just to experience more fun events then see what's coming up on page 6 or at our online magazine www.thelocalbuzz.co.uk. And if you've decide 2023 is the year to get round to updating your house or fixing all those jobs you never get round to, we have a wide range of local businesses in here who can help.

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The Neil Diamond Story

27-28 January, Core Theatre Solihull

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Story has been described in Las Vegas as one of the world's finest vocal tributes to Neil Diamond. Bob has been astounding audiences with his vocal likeness for 12 years. Tickets from www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Florence + The Machine

29 January, Resorts World Arena

Don't miss the group who have been nominated for 6 Grammys, won 2 Brit Awards, have headlined

at Glastonbury and have received massive critical acclaim from the media. Tickets from www.resortsworldarena.co.uk

Abba Tribute Night

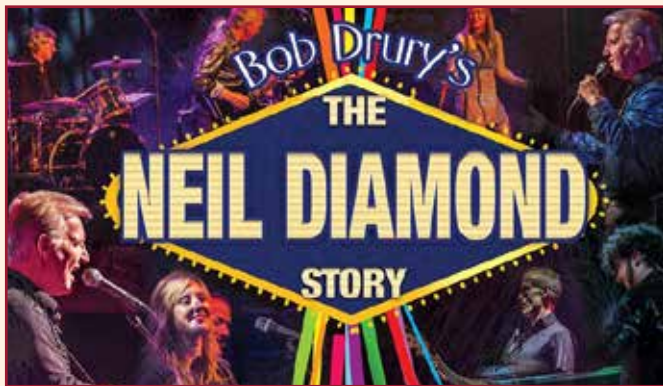
25 February, Knowle British Legion

The Melody Mias are an up tempo, highly engaging and totally interactive Abba duo show, that promises to add some glitter and sparkle to every event. Tickets from skiddle.com

Valentine's Dinner

14 February, Nailcote Hall

Want a romantic way to celebrate Valentine's Day with your loved one? Then try The Oak Room Restaurant's candlelit dinner date whilst being serenaded by guitarist Stuart Toogood. Tickets are £70 each and include a 4 course meal and glass of pink fizz. Tickets from www.nailcotehall.co.uk



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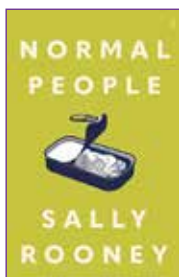
a good read

By Natasha Donovan

Normal People

by Sally Rooney

While this is a book written for adults I think older teens will find a lot to relate to. The book follows Marianne and Connell through their angsty, often quite pretentious adolescent years (and who among us wasn't at least a bit pretentious or obnoxious in their teens?) into the complications of early adulthood. Rooney treads a fine line between evoking irritation at two flawed, slightly unlikeable people, while making those flaws and the angst seem so raw and real that as a reader we begin to care about them. The novel is one about relationships and how they are affected by both class and social status. Marianne is a smart girl from an affluent family, but this does not protect



her from being socially ostracized at school and emotionally abused at home. Connell on the other hand is from a working-class family and enjoys an easy popularity. Connell's mother works as a cleaner for Marianne's family, and the teens are drawn to each other and begin a secret sexual relationship, but it falls apart because Connell does not want his friends to find out. By the time they meet again at university, Marianne is the popular one, and Connell is feeling increasingly depressed and isolated. They are once more drawn to each other as they navigate through a world filled with social expectations. Through Marianne and Connell, Rooney examines our need to impress and perform for others in a world that seems to grow ever more connected online, with so many things left unsaid face-to-face. As Marianne spirals into self-destruction and Connell looks for meaning in his life, how far will each of them go to save the other.

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Shakshuka

Shakshuka is a North African and Middle Eastern dish. It makes a wonderful spicy brunch or supper for a cold January day.



Serves: 4 with bread
Cooking time: 30-40 minutes

Ingredients

4 tbsp olive oil
 1 onion, finely sliced
 1 red pepper, diced
 1 green pepper, diced
 6 garlic cloves, crushed
 2 tsp sweet paprika
 ½ tsp cumin seeds
 ½-1 tsp cayenne pepper
 800g tinned tomatoes
 (use the best quality
 you can find)
 2 tsp soft brown sugar
 1 tbsp lemon juice
 4-8 eggs, depending
 on hunger
 Small bunch of fresh
 coriander, roughly chopped

Method

Heat the oil in a large
 frying pan (with a lid)
 and add the onion.

Fry gently until golden, then
 add the peppers and cook
 until they are soft. Stir in the
 garlic and spices and cook
 for another minute or two.

Pour in the tomatoes and
 mash roughly. Stir in the
 sugar and lemon juice. Bring
 to a boil, then turn down the
 heat and simmer for 20-30
 minutes. Taste and season.

Add a little more cayenne if
 you like your dishes spicier.

Make 4-8 hollows in the
 sauce and break an eggs
 gently into each one.

Season lightly, and turn
 the heat down as low as
 possible, cover the pan
 with the lid and cook for
 about 10 minutes until
 the eggs are just set.

Sprinkle with coriander and
 serve with crusty bread.

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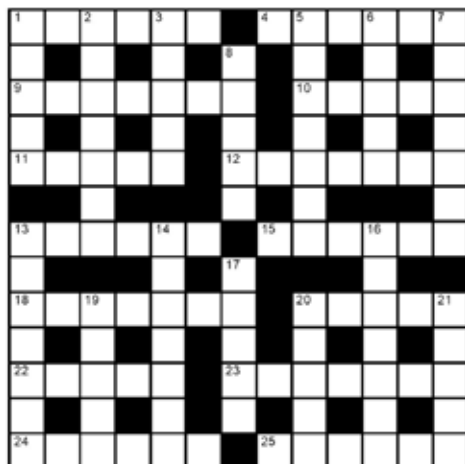
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crossword



clues

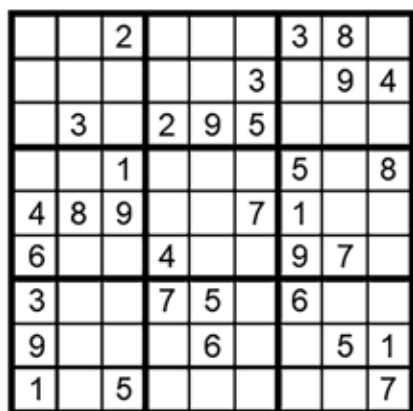
Across

- 1 Scottish plaid (6)
- 4 Entice, coax (6)
- 9 Shape with many sides (7)
- 10 Circulate, deliver (5)
- 11 Grovel (5)
- 12 Spiky plant (7)
- 13 Calendar, schedule (6)
- 15 Despot, bully (6)
- 18 Touchable (7)
- 20 Scrutinise (5)
- 22 Pretended (5)
- 23 Teeming, jammed (7)
- 24 Victim, prey (6)
- 25 Delicate, fragile (6)

Down

- 1 Subject matter (5)
- 2 Let go (7)
- 3 Seraph, cherub (5)
- 5 Nimbleness (7)
- 6 Beginning (5)
- 7 Essential feature (7)
- 8 Coalesce (5)
- 13 Captivate, fascinate (7)
- 14 Ebb, fade (7)
- 16 Kept away from (7)
- 17 Instruct (5)
- 19 Provide for (5)
- 20 Leave bread to rise (5)
- 21 Sea-dwelling duck (5)

answer on page 26

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 26

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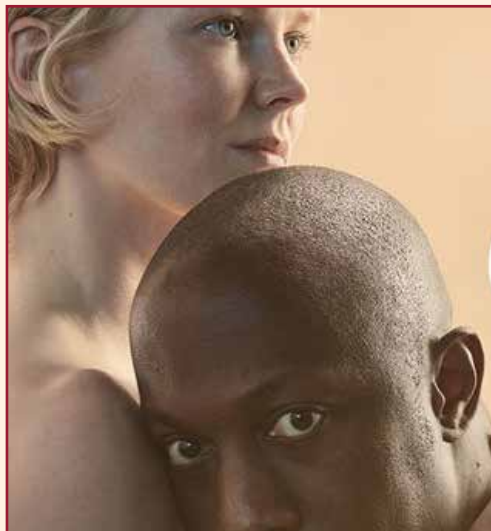


Win 2 tickets to see NT Live - Othello

Enjoy the Encore screening of the National Theatre Live production of Othello, by William Shakespeare, on the big screen at The Core Theatre Solihull. This is an extraordinary new production of Shakespeare's most enduring tragedy. These tickets are for 23rd February at The Core Theatre Solihull.

How to enter

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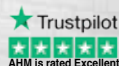


* Ts & Cs: 3-month membership must start before 1st April 2023 and is valid for 3 consecutive months. Valid at Club Motivation Solihull only and not transferable to any other hotels or leisure clubs. ** Please state in your email if you do not wish for Club Motivation to contact you by email.

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TikTok Takeover

If you haven't heard of TikTok you've probably been living with the Amish for the past few years.

TikTok is the social media platform which allows users to create short-form

videos up to three minutes long. Users, known as TikTokers, share everything from original music, to lip-synching videos to funny moments and pranks.

The TikTok App Has Been Downloaded 3 billion Times and there are 900 million active users worldwide. During the pandemic when people were quarantining at home, TikTok was a major beneficiary of increased social media use. It was the most downloaded app of 2021, beating Instagram, Facebook, and Snapchat.

TikTok was created by Chinese tech giant ByteDance and released in September 2016 under the name 'Douyin'. Instagram and Facebook are banned in China, so there was an opening for a video-sharing social networking service. When ByteDance acquired Musical.ly - which allowed its users to create and share 15-second lip-sync videos - it merged a lot of the features, and in August 2018 TikTok was born.

TikTok is best known for dance and lip-sync videos, made possible by TikTok's extensive music library, called 'Sounds'. The music is licensed from labels like Sony, Warner and Universal. Recording a video involves selecting the music, which plays through your smartphone's speaker in real-time while you're filming. TikTok's algorithm works out users' tastes and preferences based on how they engage with the app, and whenever a new video is uploaded, the algorithm displays it to a small group of users. If it gets a lot of likes and shares, it will be shown to



more users with similar interests. If it continues to be popular the process repeats and the video might go viral. This can happen whether the creator has hundreds of thousands of followers or just a handful.

Democracy is one of the features that makes TikTok so attractive.

TikTok is now a global platform available in 155 countries. 90% of users access the platform daily and spend just under an hour on the app. Almost half of users are in the 16-24 age bracket and cite the online community as the

best feature. 'Duet' is the main community-building feature. It allows users to record themselves alongside existing TikTok videos in a split-screen format, or they can choose to use just the audio from the original video, which is credited at the bottom of the video as the "Original sound". Tapping on the 'Original sound' icon links you to the original TikTok video, as well as all other TikTok videos using the same 'Original sound'. Users can then respond to, parody or perform alongside other TikTokers, and the videos (which include the TikTok logo and the TikToker's username), can be downloaded and shared to other platforms. It's easy to see why memes and challenges can go viral very quickly on TikTok. The platform also allows users to include links to Instagram pages, YouTube channels and any other social media presence, which makes it straightforward for users to build their brand.

TikTok is hugely popular but social media is a fickle industry and it's difficult to project too far into the future. The popularity of any social media platform depends on whether it can keep users on board and whether corporate controversy gets in the way...just think about Twitter!

Winter Scent

I love a garden planted for winter. There are so many plants with wonderful shape and interesting evergreen foliage. But the thing that draws me out into any garden is scent, and fragrance is particularly uplifting in the depths of winter.

Getting outdoors into natural daylight, even on a cold, dank day is a mood booster. If you need an excuse to don woolly hat and gloves then what better than winter-flowering shrubs. Even better if you can cut a few sprigs to take back indoors. *Chimonanthus praecox*, known as Wintersweet is the type of shrub that looks rather unexciting in spring and summer, but in winter once established (which may take a couple of years) the bare branches erupt with lovely waxy yellow flowers which have an intense sweet and spicy scent.#

For a little spot near the front or back door, think about *Daphne bholua*, a shade-loving, tiny, evergreen shrub which produces delicate pink or white blooms that look like they are made from fondant icing. They have a rich floral, old-fashioned scent.

If space is limited you also try *Sarcococca hookeriana*. This is also a shade-lover and produced a very powerful jasmine-like scent which carries well on the breeze.

If you have more space and would like something more robust then plant *Viburnum x bodnantense*. It produces pom-poms of flowers in pastel pink or white which smell of warm vanilla and lilac. It also has an extremely long flowering season, starting in mid-autumn and going right through until early spring.

All of the above flowers can be cut, and will last for several days in a vase in the house. But January is also the perfect time to enjoy gardening indoors. My teenage son collects cacti and was gifted a striking,



ornamental cactus with funky foliage a couple of years ago, called *Epiphyllum anguliger*. The wavy-edge leaves which oscillate along the stem give rise to its more common name, the Fishbone Cactus. As well as looking handsome all year round it has the delightful bonus of producing large creamy white flowers in winter which emit a wonderful scent in the evening, just one bloom can fill a room with a sweet fragrance.

You don't have to be deprived of scent in the winter months. Make a New Year's resolution to bring some fragrance into your garden, and your home.

Fact or fiction?

Common relationship questions

Dipika Mistry, Legal Director at law firm Shakespeare Martineau in Solihull answers some of the frequently asked questions from couples across the country.

1. We're not married, but we've been together years – will I get 50%?

This is such a common misconception when unmarried couples part ways, but there is no such thing as a 'common law wife/partner'. If you choose not to marry then do consider a living together agreement to protect your best interests and ensure that if you own a home together that your name is included on the deed.

2. Can I get divorced if we have just drifted apart?

Yes – from 6 April 2022 'no fault divorce' has been introduced, which means parting couples no longer have to prove their marriage has irretrievably broken down due to one of the five 'divorce facts': adultery, unreasonable behaviour, desertion, or separation of at least two years or in some cases five years. Instead, they can apply for divorce jointly, without assigning any blame on one party.

3. Do I have to give my engagement ring back if we split?

If you break up with your partner, you may feel a moral obligation to return the ring - however, unless it can be proved that the ring was given conditionally, the law states that it is an absolute gift, meaning you do not have to return it to your ex.

4. Is my prenuptial agreement (pre-nup) legally binding?

No. A pre-nup is not legally binding in English law, however, they are becoming increasingly upheld provided that they are entered into fairly and on a voluntary basis and both parties have received independent legal advice before doing so. Pre-nups do not overrule a court's decision on financial arrangements on divorce but they do carry some influence.

5. I want to get divorced, but I don't want to go to court, what can I do?

Collaborative law is a great option for couples who are amicable and want to avoid going to court. This is where both parties each instruct a collaboratively trained lawyer and work together to find a suitable divorce settlement, including financial and child matters.

Separation and divorce can be highly stressful and emotional, so it's important to have a trusted advisor by your side.



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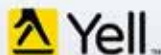
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Solihull Police Station:

0845 113 5000 or 101



crossword Solution

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Sudoku Solution

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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

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.

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