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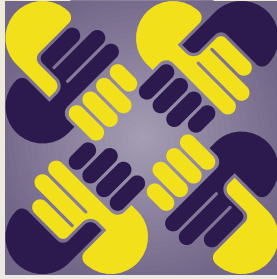
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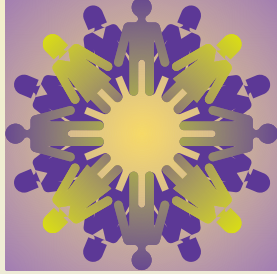
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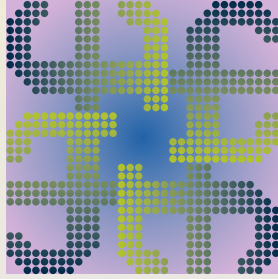
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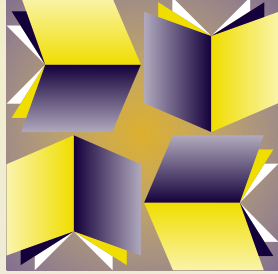
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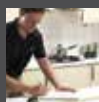
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October's full of opportunities...

... to have a good time. It doesn't matter that the weather's turned colder, there's always lots of great events going on locally. Check out what local events are coming up on page 6 and see what's going on at the theatre and cinema on page 32.

Make sure you fill your house with treats (or tricks!) in time for Halloween on 31st October and get your sparklers at the ready for Bonfire Night on 5th November.

Until next month...

Zoe



Zoe Reece

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community events

Afternoon Tea at Knowle Village Hall

19 October, 1-4pm

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Tickets £8.50 each. Available from KVHA Friday Coffee Morning (10am -noon) at the Hall or call June Williams on 01564 779445 or Carolyn Abbott on 01564 779898. All proceeds will go to the Hall Refurbishment Fund.

most horrifying Halloween outfit for a chance to win a prize in the fancy-dress competition! Bring a torch and warm clothing. Pre-booking is essential - book tickets via the Contact Centre on 0121 704 8000 - £3 per adult, £2 per child. Meet by the car park.



prizes to be won! Please visit Customer Support on the 1st floor to purchase your ticket.



Festive Feast and Outdoor Cinema

16-22 December

Mell Square, Solihull

The Festive Feast will be back for another year! Get your last-minute stocking fillers and a tasty bite to eat for lunch. Also look out for the return of the free Christmas outdoor cinema.



Haunting Halloween Fan of the Brick Party

27 October, 5.30pm; 5.50pm;

6.10pm; 6.30pm; 6.50pm

Bruton Park, B91 3HA

Take a scary walk around the park to meet Smelly Nelly the witch and her monstrous friends, enjoy spooky storytelling and mysterious magic, and finish with a creepy craft activity. Wear the

29-31 October, from 10am

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Limited spaces! Tickets cost £15 per child and include a gift and a picnic bag. Lego at 10-11am, picnic at 11-11.30am. There will be games, competitions and

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- **Councillor's Surgery** - these are face-to-face meetings held by councillors for local people to raise issues in their area. First and last Saturday of the month, 10.00am-12.00pm
- **Rhyme Time** - Wednesdays 10.15am to 10.30am, term-time only. A short interactive session for 0-2s that includes finger and action rhymes and songs. Come along and meet up with other parents/carers and discover what the library can offer your child.
- **Meet and Play** - Fridays 10.15am to 11.15am, age 0 - 2 years (term time only). Our new Meet and

Play session offers the chance for young families to meet up, relax, chat, play, sing or make music together! The session is for families, led by families. Toys and musical instruments are provided. For more information contact 0121 704 6965.

- **Homework Club** - Tuesdays 3.45pm to 5.15pm, term time only
- **Silent Reading Cafe** - Held once a month on Thursday evenings, this is a chance to unwind and read in a cosy, informal environment without distractions. It begins with an hour of silent reading from 6pm with a chance to chat (if you want) between 7pm and 7.45pm.

27th Lions Festive Walk

27 December

Baddesley Clinton

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Be sure to fill up your car by inviting all your friends and relatives for a choice of 4 sign-posted routes of between 1.4 & 9.1 miles.

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Sat 23rd	SOUL AND MOTOWN SHOW with NAT AUGUSTIN	£35.00
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Sat 7th	THE 'GREATEST SHOWMAN' PARTY with DAVID 'BARNUM' LAWRENCE	£49.50
Fri 13th	THE XMAS 'MAMMA MIA' PARTY with BOOTLEG ABBA	£39.50
Fri 13th	THE 'HITS OF THE DECADES' PARTY with JARZINO	£45.00
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Fri 20th	THE 'TAKE THAT' SPECTACULAR with 'TAKE@THAT'	£45.00
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Sat 21st	THE XMAS SOUL AND FUNK PARTY with 'MARKS BROTHERS'	£45.00
Sat 28th	THE 'GEORGE MICHAEL' TRIBUTE SHOW with MICHAEL GEORGE	£32.50
Tue 31st	NEW YEARS EVE 'BLACK TIE' MOTOWN BALL with SOULTOWN COLLECTIVE	£85.00

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Fireworks

How fireworks work!

Most of us love watching fireworks, but have you ever thought about how rockets work? It's a fascinating science and if you read on, you'll be able to amaze your friends in the pub after attending your local display.

Fireworks are essentially small missiles designed to explode in a controlled and colourful way. The word 'firework' originates from the Greek word pyrotechnics, which means, 'fire art' or 'fire skill'; and modern rocket designs require both in huge amounts.

Rockets mostly consist of five main parts.

The tail or the stick – This protrudes from the bottom and ensures the firework shoots in a straight line, which is important for two reasons: first, so that the rocket doesn't fly off in a random direction, and injure someone; and second, because it aids accuracy and precision when creating complex displays.

Fuse - This is the part that allows the firework to be ignited safely. It allows a time delay before the main part of the firework (the charge) begins to burn. This charge ignites other, smaller fuses that make the interesting, colourful parts of the firework (the effects) explode a little later. In a basic rocket, the main fuse consists of a piece of paper or fabric that you light with a match. In a complex public firework display, fuses are lit by electrical contacts known as wirebridge fuseheads. When the firework technician pushes a button, an electric current flows along a wire into the fusehead, which ignites the main fuse. Electrical ignition has the advantage it can be done at a very safe distance.



Charge - This is actually a fairly crude explosive designed to blast the rocket up into the sky. Some rockets travel at speeds as fast as a fighter jet. The charge is usually made up of tightly packed, coarse explosive gunpowder (known as black powder) and simply sends the firework high into the air, clear of spectators; it's not responsible for the spectacular colours.

Effect - This is the business end of the firework. A single firework may have just one effect, or several, packed into separate compartments which fire off in sequence, ignited by a time-delay fuse. Effects are explosives too, but different from the main charge. Each effect is made up of more loosely packed, finer explosive material, often fashioned into separate 'stars', which make up the small, individual, colourful explosions from a larger firework. The arrangement of patterns and colours depend on how each effect is made and packed.

Head - This is the top part of the firework which contains the effect or effects. Sometimes the head has a pointed nosecone to make the firework faster and more aerodynamic and improve the chance of it going in a straight line.

However, you choose to enjoy the fireworks this year remember safety should always be paramount. **Follow the firework code.**

By Tracey Anderson



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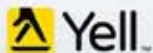
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Skin Deep - Basal Cell Carcinoma

By Aoife Brennan

It began with an insect bite on my right cheek. At least I thought it was a bite though I didn't remember being bitten. I dabbed it with tea tree oil and waited for it to heal up. It sort of did, but then grew a little and flaked a little. It was tiny, maybe 2-3mm across but something about it bothered me. I told myself that if it hadn't gone in a month, I'd see the GP. It didn't change much over that time, but neither did it go away so, listening to my gut feelings, I went to see my GP feeling a little foolish (I wasn't sick after all) and fully expected to be dismissed as one of the worried well, but after inspecting it the GP looked thoughtful. **"I think it might be a BCC. A basal cell carcinoma."** I was shocked. Carcinoma was cancer, right? I was only 50. **Was I going to die?**

A basal cell carcinoma is indeed a type of skin cancer. There are two main types of skin cancer: melanoma and non-melanoma. BCC is a non-melanoma type, and accounts for more than 80% of skin cancers in the UK.

As with most skin cancers, exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light from the sun or from sunbeds is the cause, which is why they often appear most often on the face or head of fair skinned people like me. I am not a sunbather, nor have I ever used sunbeds. I do like to be outdoors, cycling and kayaking but I always wear sun protection and a hat. **I'm a natural redhead though,** with freckles so I am in a higher risk group.

BCCs vary in appearance, from small red flaky areas; scabs that bleed but don't heal, or pearly little lumps, often with a central depression. They are generally painless, although sometimes they can be itchy or bleed a little if you catch them with your nail.



I had to undergo a skin biopsy under local anaesthetic to confirm the diagnosis. The dermatologist was at pains to reassure me that **BCCs** rarely spread to other areas of the body and can be cured in almost every case, although treatment can be more complicated if the **BCC** has been present for a long time, or if it occurs in an awkward place, such as close to the eye or on the nose or ear.

The commonest treatment for BCC is surgery under local anaesthesia. The BCC is cut away, along with some surrounding skin. There are generally just a few stitches but sometimes a skin graft is needed. Sometimes radiotherapy, curettage (scraping), cautery (heat treatment), cryotherapy (freezing treatment), photodynamic therapy (PTD), or creams may be used instead.

My BCC was removed surgically. I was worried I would have a large scar as the wound seemed very large in comparison to the size of the lesion but six months later it's faded so much that you can barely see it.

Treatment is easier if a BCC is detected early. So, if you notice a new lesion on your face (or anywhere on your body) which is growing, or which bleeds and never really heals, **or if your skin appearance has changed in any way don't wait, consult your GP. It's worth it.**

The Jack O' Lantern

Why we carve pumpkins at Halloween

We think of the Halloween pumpkin lantern as an American invention but in fact it was the Irish who took the tradition of carving pumpkins to America, except the original Jack O' Lantern was not a pumpkin because they didn't exist in Ireland. Celtic cultures actually carved turnips on All Hallows' Eve and placed a glowing piece of coal or a candle in them, to ward off evil spirits.

There are many stories behind these turnip lanterns but one of the most popular comes from **The Tale of Stingy Jack**.

Stingy Jack was a grumpy old drunkard who liked to play malicious tricks on just about everyone including his family, friends and his mother. He was proud of his antics and boasted that **he could trick the Devil himself**. The Devil heard about Jack and paid him a visit. Jack was as good as his word and tricked the Devil into climbing up an apple tree. Once the Devil was in the tree, Stingy Jack hurriedly placed crosses around the base of its trunk. The Devil couldn't touch the crosses, so he was stuck in the tree. Stingy Jack made the Devil promise him not to take his soul when he died. Reluctantly the Devil agreed, and Stingy Jack removed the crosses, and allowed the Devil to climb back down.

Many years later, when Jack died, he found his way to the pearly gates of Heaven.

Saint Peter told him that because he'd been mean and cruel and had led a miserable, worthless life he could not let him enter Heaven. Stingy Jack then went down to Hell. The Devil smiled mischievously and said he was bound by the promise he'd made in the



apple tree and would not allow him to enter Hell. Stingy Jack became really scared. He had nowhere to go and was doomed to wander about forever in the dark Netherworld between heaven and hell. He protested to the Devil that there was no light, so the Devil tossed him a piece of coal from the flames of Hell. Jack always carried a turnip with him because it was one of his favourite foods. He hollowed out the turnip and placed the glowing coal the Devil had given him inside. From that day onward, Stingy Jack roamed the earth without a resting place, lighting his way as he went with his '**Jack O' Lantern**'.

On all Hallows' eve, it became the tradition for Irish people to hollow out Turnips, swedes, potatoes and beets. They placed a little light in them to ward off evil spirits and keep Stingy Jack away. These were the original Jack O' Lanterns. In the 1800's waves of Irish people travelled to America in search of better lives. **These Irish immigrants quickly discovered that American Pumpkins were bigger and much easier to carve,** so they began to use pumpkins for **Jack O' Lanterns**. Eventually this new trend found its way back across the Atlantic to Ireland and the UK.

By Aoife Brennan

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The Parents' Evening - Survival Guide

Top five tips for a successful meeting.

Talk to your child - Children are often apprehensive about parents' evenings. Even a quiet, well-behaved child may worry a teacher will complain about them. Ask your child if they have any issues with their lessons or with classmates. Make them understand that the meeting is held for their benefit and that you're on their side.

Prepare – Write down important questions. You have a limited time with teachers. A list of questions prevents you from missing important points in the discussion.

Discuss any problems – Share insights

about your child in the meeting. Let the teacher know if they are upset about things like a grandparent being poorly. These insights may help a teacher understand why your child might be acting differently.

Listen to the teacher - They spend hours observing your child. Be aware that your child may behave differently in a school environment. If the teacher points out any negative qualities in your child don't lose your temper. Take the suggestions on board.

Be on time – There will be other parents scheduled after you so make sure you are punctual.

By Karen Campbell





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The Big Draw - October 1st -31st



October is the official month of the worldwide project The Big Draw, which promotes the benefits of drawing for children and adults.

I enjoyed art at school but like many kids I stopped drawing when I realised I'd never be 'good'. Turns out you don't need to be. The beauty of drawing is that you get all the benefits even if you make the average toddler look like Da Vinci.

Drawing develops fine motor skills - Drawing provides immediate visual feedback that changes depending on the type of pencil, pen or crayon used and how its manipulated. This feedback helps to identify the best ways to produce the desired result. Fine motor skills are important for writing and typing in school, but are also great for adults with arthritis or mobility issues.

Drawing improves hand-eye coordination - If you're trying to reproduce what you see then you are exercising hand-eye co-ordination. This helps with writing but also in sport!

Drawing helps you see - By drawing objects in proximity to each other we learn about

distance, size, perspective, and texture. It makes us really look at the world in ways we may never have done so before.

Drawing aids concentration - Studying an object, focussing on form and detail takes time. If we're enjoying that process it aids concentration. This is helpful for both children in school, but also older people, particularly in early stage dementia.

Drawing improves problem-solving - How do you connect body parts, convey distance or size, represent emotion or texture? These are all creative problems to be solved.

Drawing boosts confidence - If you practice, you improve and feel good, whether you're an adult or a child, that's a confidence boost you can take into other areas of your life.

Drawing is a great activity and beneficial for any age group or ability level. Look out for local activities related to **The Big Draw**.

For more information visit
<https://thebigdraw.org>

By Karen Campbell

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COMPETITION



WIN 2 TICKETS

to see Geoff Norcott: Taking Liberties

on Saturday 16th November

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

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

What did the Telegraph say about Geoff?

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

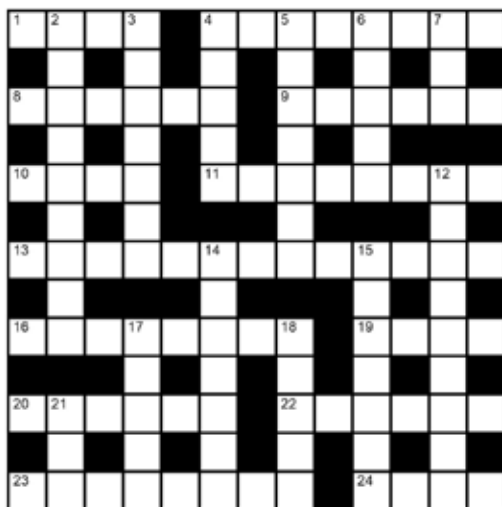
Closing date for entries is 31st October. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

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 star of BBC2's Live At The Apollo, The Mash Report and his own forthcoming BBC Radio 4 special, Geoff has had a run of three sell out Edinburgh Festival shows and a much acclaimed tour. He has also been seen as a guest on BBC1's Question Time, Radio 4's The Now Show and supported Katherine Ryan on her UK tour. Geoff appeared in Solihull during 2018 with great success and is delighted to return to this leafy borough!

crossword



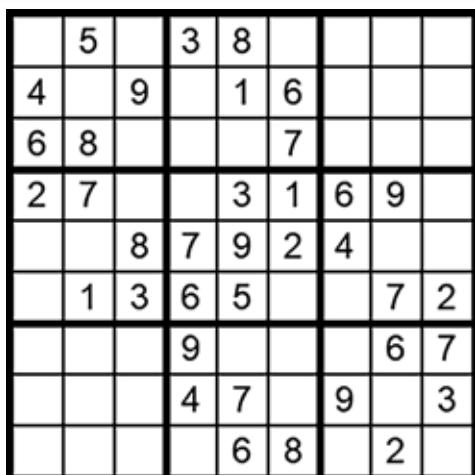
clues

Across

- 1 Ripped (4)
- 4 Commenced, began (8)
- 8 The _____ Night, painting by Van Gogh (6)
- 9 Gifted, high intellect (6)
- 10 Type of bean (4)
- 11 Worn to shreds (8)
- 13 Autonomously (13)
- 16 Breaking out (8)
- 19 Exhaust, drain (4)
- 20 Decline (6)
- 22 Inception, genesis (6)
- 23 Mimics (8)
- 24 Lady _____, singer and actor (4)

Down

- 2 Expenses (9)
- 3 Commentate (7)
- 4 Home of the Pyramids (5)
- 5 Small-minded, prejudiced (7)
- 6 Wash out in clear water (5)
- 7 Flightless bird (3)
- 12 Making bigger (9)
- 14 Obvious (7)
- 15 zero (7)
- 17 Grown-up (5)
- 18 Paint with a shiny finish (5)
- 21 Type of deciduous tree (3)



how to play sudoku

It's simple!

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

answers on page 36

Rats-tales - Why you should consider a rat as your next pet.

Rats suffer from bad press, but these intelligent little rodents actually make delightful pets, as celebrities from Paris Hilton to John Cleese can testify. Rupert Grint, who played Ron Weasley in the Harry Potter films fell in love with the two rats who played Scabbers and asked to adopt them when filming ended.

They are clean creatures and groom themselves frequently and diligently. They can even be trained to use a litter tray!

They're smart and empathetic too. Rats are intelligent, highly social and inquisitive little animals. They spend lots of time exploring

and playing, and form life-long bonds. They recognise their owners and respond to their voice. They will choose to hang out with their human family members on the couch or riding on their shoulders.

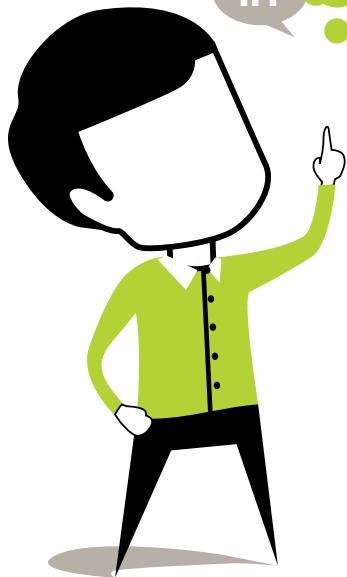
They have an uncomplicated diet. Commercial 'rat blocks', which are nutritionally-complete pellets available at pet stores can be supplemented with vegetables from your kitchen.

The only thing better than one rat is two rats! They do better in pairs because they keep each other amused.

By Tracey Anderson



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The Screen Time Debate!

How much is too much?

For many parents battles over screen time and devices have become a frustrating part of family life. So how much screen time is too much for kids? Well, it's complicated. For some years parents have been advised to limit media consumption, but new research suggests it's the quality not the quantity that matters.

Until quite recently parenting advice centred around the concept of screen time quotas with a Goldilocks-style sweet spot of two or so hours of screens a day, **beyond which media use could become harmful. But now the advice is more conflicting.** There seems to be a general consensus that under the age of six there should be no more than one hour of "high-quality programming" per day, but for older kids the advice is simply to **"place consistent limits on the time spent using media"** and to designate some screen-free time as a family. Unfortunately it's not clear whether **"consistent limits"** means four hours playing a video game on a Sunday every week, or whether three 20-minute sessions on an iPad is preferable to one hour-long session.

What is clear is that for young children one of the most important things is whether parents and kids play, watch or browse together. The nature of screen time matters. Passive TV is potentially more harmful than game-playing, socialising, or using creative apps. Psychologists are likening our media diets to what we put on our plates. **It's not just about digital junk-food, it's about the relationship we have with technology** and the role it plays in our family life. We need to avoid using screens to distract teens or younger children from uncomfortable



emotions, in the same way we wouldn't encourage the use junk food to soothe them.

Interestingly a recent study of 20,000 parents published by the Oxford Internet Institute and Cardiff University determined that there was no correlation between limiting device use and children's wellbeing. Another study by the University of Michigan on children aged four to 11 similarly found that it was how children use devices, not how much time they spend on them, which is the strongest predictor of emotional or social problems connected with screen addiction.

Although specific screen time limits are out of date, there is evidence that excessive use has negative impacts, affecting sleep, health and mood. Screen time, in and of itself, is not harmful – but reasonable restrictions vary greatly, depending on your child's behaviour and personality. A useful strategy for parents is to ensure that what they're watching, playing and reading is high-quality, age-appropriate and safe – and to join in wherever possible.

Balancing the online and offline world seems to be key, and that may vary greatly from family to family. **Research shows that not having access to the digital world has a negative impact on kids too** – so it's all about finding the right amount for your family, with an holistic approach.

There's a lot to be said for knowing your child and using your common sense!

By Louise Addison

Tomato Chutney

If you're wary of making chutneys and jams start with this easy recipe

Makes about 1.5 litres / 2¾ pints

Preparation time: 40-50 minutes

Cooking time: 50 minutes

Ingredients

1kg ripe tomatoes, peeled and chopped
750g cooking apple, peeled, cored and chopped
375g light muscovado sugar
250g onion, finely chopped
250g raisins
1 green pepper, deseeded and chopped
2 tsp salt
½ tsp ground ginger
350ml cider vinegar

Method

Place all the ingredients into a large pan and bring to the boil over a medium heat. Stir occasionally until the sugar has dissolved. Simmer the mixture gently, uncovered, for about 45-50 mins or until everything is tender and thickened. Cool, then transfer the mixture to a sterilised jar and seal.
It was always the sterilising that put me off. I

thought you had to have heaps of special equipment, but actually it's quite easy.

How to sterilise jars

Wash the jars and the lids in hot soapy water. Rinse but do not dry them. Instead, leave them to stand upside down on a roasting tray with a raised wire stand (to allow air to circulate) while they're still wet.

Place the tray of clean, wet jars and lids into a preheated oven at 160-180°C for about 15 mins.

The trick to jams and chutneys is that the jars and the chutney (or jam) should be hot. Ladle the hot preserve into a heatproof jug to make it easier to transfer the mixture into the hot jars. Be very careful not to touch or get any of the mixture onto the rim of the jars as this could introduce bacteria.

Fill the jars not quite to the top, leave a 1/2cm gap at the top between the preserve and the lid.

While everything is still hot, cover the jars with their lids or top with wax paper and a piece of cellophane secured tightly with an elastic band.

Your chutney should keep for about 6 months in a cool, dark place, though different recipes vary slightly.



Makes about 1.5 litres / 2¾ pints

Preparation time: 40-50 mins

Cooking time: 50 mins

a taster of what's coming up...

CINEMA



Maleficent from 18th October

The years have been kind to Maleficent and Aurora yet the hatred between man and the fairies still exists. Aurora's impending marriage is cause for celebration as the wedding serves to unite the two worlds. When an unexpected encounter introduces a powerful new alliance, Maleficent and Aurora are pulled apart to opposing sides in a Great War, testing their loyalties.

Official Secrets from 18th October

The true story of a British whistleblower who leaked information to the press about an illegal NSA spy operation designed to push the UN Security Council into sanctioning the 2003 invasion of Iraq.



Shaun the Sheep: Farmageddon

from 13th October

When an alien with amazing powers crash-lands near Mossy Bottom Farm, Shaun sees an opportunity for alien-powered fun, setting off on a mission to shepherd the intergalactic visitor home before a sinister organisation can capture her... can Shaun avert Farmageddon before it's too late?



To book please visit www.cineworld.co.uk

THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull



The Wizard of Oz by Ballet Theatre UK

30th October

Ballet Theatre UK will breathe new life into the Wizard of Oz tale, a classic tale more known than ever following the success of Wicked around the world. See Glinda and her nasty sister do their best (and worst) in this delightful adaptation.

The Scarecrows' Wedding

1st - 2nd November

An award-winning adaptation of Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler's bestselling book. The

wedding plans for Betty O'Barley and Harry O'Hay's big day are all coming together until Harry leaves Betty's side and Reginald Rake tries to take Harry's place. Will Harry make it back in time to save their special day?



Seven brides For Seven Brothers

5th-9th November

Bursting with the energy of the original MGM film, this is all boisterous fun and romance that harkens back to the glory days of the movie musical. A rollicking adventure that teaches that it takes a bride to turn seven unkempt brothers into gentlemen and to turn desire into romance.



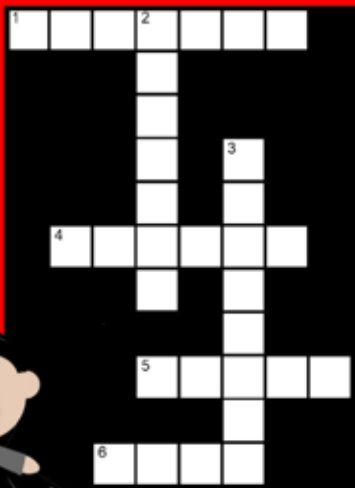
To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk



Kids' Page



HALLOWEEN CROSSWORD



Across

1.



4.



5.



6.



Down

2.



3.

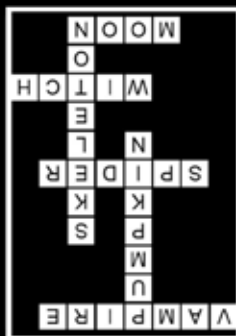


Halloween Tongue Twisters

Professional pumpkin pickers pick the plumpest pumpkins.

Which witch wished which wicked wish?

The biggest pumpkin ever was grown by a man in America, in New Hampshire. It weighed an astonishing 2538lbs or 1147Kg. Imagine carving that!



a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

The Shining

by Stephen King

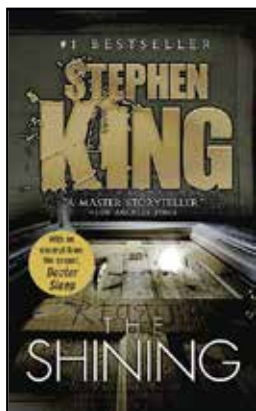
Even if you have seen and loved Stanley Kubrick's film, you should read the book. The book is not the film. The book is a deeper (and scarier) experience altogether.

Stephen King is a master storyteller, and in *The Shining* he created a classic novel of possession and isolation.

The Torrances are a damaged family. Jack is an ex-teacher and sometime writer with a drink problem, who takes the only job he can find – the winter caretaker at a hotel called The Overlook. He takes along his wife, and young son Danny. They are welcomed by the chef, Dick Hallorann, who has psychic abilities which he calls 'the shine', and Dick quickly realises that Danny shines too. He has to leave but forms a powerful connection with Danny promising that wherever he is if Danny calls to him, he will hear and come – a promise he later honours.

Ostensibly Danny is the main character and the book is about his father's descent into madness, but it is the hotel which dominates the story. Jack appears to become possessed by forces at work there. The tension and claustrophobia build a threatening atmosphere. Prepare to be transported into the long, dark corridors at The Overlook Hotel and know that something dreadful awaits you there.

As the plot develops, we question whether Jack is really possessed or simply an alcoholic losing



his mind, and whether Danny is psychic or whether what he sees is because he's been so damaged by his dysfunctional family. King's skill is to weave together the demons, both real and imagined without drawing any distinct boundaries between the two. As the story builds to its terrifying conclusion you will be on the edge of your seat.

By the Light of the Halloween Moon

by Caroline Stutson
and Kevin Hawkes



I rarely recommend a book you may have to find second hand, but there are plenty available from various sources and it is well worth the effort in time for Halloween. Caroline Stutson's infectious graphic story, full of rhythmic repetition and alliteration, simply bounces along. It all begins on the night of a full Halloween moon, when we see a wiggling toe being stalked by a black cat. The cat never reaches the toe, because it is stopped by a witch, and so the scene is set for a succession of scary creatures, including a bungling, bouncy, breezy bat and a grumpy grungy hobgoblin sprite, who are all thwarted in their various attempts to reach the toe. The repetition of key lines makes it a terrific book for reading aloud and encourages younger children to join in, while Kevin Hawkes' scary-comic illustrations make *By the Light of the Halloween Moon* an appealing book for children and adults alike. The ending, where we finally meet the owner of the wiggling toe, is delightful and sure to leave everyone smiling.

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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

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

Sudoku Solution

from page 27

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

Crossword Solution

from page 27



Mindbenders Solution

from page 16

Beautiful blueberries

By Rachael Leverton

I love **blueberries** and they are not only incredibly good for you but also quite simple to grow. They thrive in a sunny border or in a pot on a balcony or patio, so there's no excuse for not harvesting a crop of your own.

In addition, they are a generous plant. All varieties produce pretty white flowers in the spring, followed by delicate green fruits which ripen to deep blue. **If that wasn't enough, the foliage then turns pink and peach for Autumn.**

Blueberry bushes do require an acid soil to thrive but if you don't have that (I don't!) then use pots of well-drained ericaceous compost. When you need to re-pot, choose a pot just a few inches larger because they fruit better in a snug pot! Ensure it has adequate drainage holes and put some stones or crocks in the bottom and keep it raised so it doesn't become waterlogged. Water with rainwater from your water butt, especially if you live in a hardwater area. Make sure they are watered well while they become established and also while the fruit is ripening. Feeding with tomato food helps too. Poor or erratic watering causes the blueberries to shrivel or split, and **no-one likes a shrivelled blueberry!**

If you have acid soil you can plant blueberry bushes at any time of year when the ground is soft. Dig a hole twice the size of the root-ball and spread the roots as you refill the hole to the base of the stem. Press the soil down with the heel of your boot.



Blueberries are sun-lovers and will fruit most abundantly in full sun. They are better grown in pairs to allow for cross-pollination. If you can bear it, remove the flower buds in the first year after planting because it encourages strong stem growth better fruiting for the following year. They don't require any pruning for a few years. After that thin overcrowded or unproductive branches in winter after the leaves have fallen. **Remember blueberries fruit on branches produced the previous year**, so each year remove one or two of the oldest canes to make space for the more productive younger stems.

In the winter move pots to a sheltered area or the shed for protection.

NOTE – Our feathered friends love blueberries as much as we do so make sure you protect you harvest with netting!

Happy Gardening,



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Carol Tromans, Solihull

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