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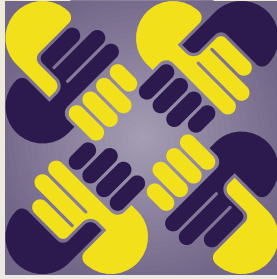
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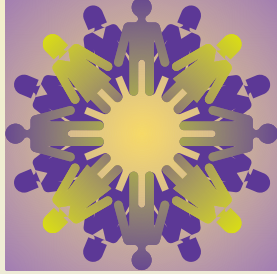
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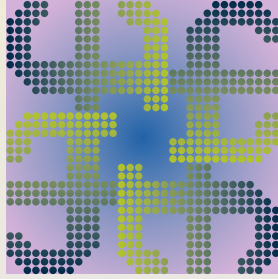
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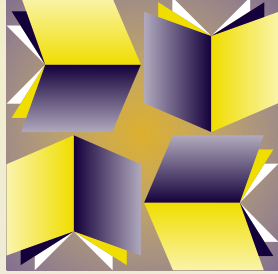
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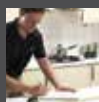
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Back to reality!

Welcome to the September edition

September's the perfect time to start updating your home, after the kids have gone back to school and before the Christmas rush starts. All of the businesses and tradespeople who advertise in this magazine work locally and would love your support.

As usual, there's lots going on in the area – from the 9th Solihull Food & Drink Festival to opera evenings at Carluccio's and Fun in the Park at Tudor Grange Park - see page 6 for more details.

However you choose spend your time, I hope you have a great month.



Zoe

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

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community events

Fun in the park

22 September, 11am-5pm

Tudor Grange Park

Includes classic car display, classic motorbike display, dog display team, face painting, swing boats, go karts, dancing and singing, local food and produce, dog show and a pop-up pub. £3 for adults, £2 for children, family £7.50.



Fashion Show in aid of the Alzheimer Society

26 September, 5.30-8pm

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all the latest trends. Enjoy a glass of fizz and goody bag on arrival. Dyson hair experience and make up demonstrations. Tickets £10, available from Customer Support on First Floor, with proceeds going to The Alzheimer Society.



Solihull Food & Drink Festival

27-29 September

Solihull Town Centre

Not only are we bringing back the much-loved demo kitchen, taster tent, diverse delicious variety of food and drink, dining discount booklet, family entertainment, and the live music stage... this year we are also

adding a rum and reggae zone and a free outdoor cinema!



Opera evening at Carluccio's

1 October from 6.30pm

High Street, Solihull

Arrive at 6:30pm for a glass of prosecco and canapés before you sit down for a specially selected Italian 3 course dinner whilst our much-loved opera singers create the perfect ambience. £40 per person (includes glass of prosecco, canapés, 3 course dinner and entertainment). To book, please call 0121 704 5215.

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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.

Ladies Fashion Show

10 October 7-10pm

St. Mary's Church, Hobs Moat

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As Summer draws to a close we look forward to the new season ahead. Autumn brings cooler shorter days, channelling our thoughts into transforming our homes into a warm and cosy place.

Here at Hatton Shopping Village we have some lovely home style shops which are perfect if you're looking to refresh your home or spruce up a room or two.

Located in the beautiful Warwickshire countryside Hatton Shopping Village is a lovely alternative for getting away from the hum drum of busy town centres with all their stress, traffic and pollution.

With the addition of several new shops to discover, the quintessential English shopping village is perfect to meander around for a couple of hours and maybe pick up a treat or two along the way.

Hatton Furniture has been established for many years and is popular with regular visitors and offer a great selection of gifts and accessories for both home and garden.

Hay Store Antiques and Interiors opened its doors at Hatton recently and has already built up a happy following. Hosting a variety of 14 dealers offering an eclectic mix of antiques, soft furnishings, up-cycled furniture and giftware it is a lovely addition to the Village.

Lily Anne adjoins **Hatton Sweet Shop** and is well established. The ideal place for gifts for all occasions throughout the year.

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TATT - Are you tired all the time?

By Sarah Davey

How do you feel when you wake up? Are you refreshed and ready for the day? Or do you feel drained, like you've hardly slept.

GPs report that more patients are complaining of lack of energy. The syndrome even has its own name, **TATT** - which means tired all the time.

If you constantly feel lethargic it is important not to ignore it. **TATT** is common but there are steps you can take to help yourself. There are many different causes of fatigue, and a good place to start is a chat with your GP.

If you feel overwhelming exhaustion, which gets worse rather than better with activity, and does not improve with rest, you might be suffering from **myalgic encephalopathy (ME)** or **chronic fatigue syndrome (CFS)**. There is not a definitive cure for these conditions but there are treatments and self-help measures that can help to ease the symptoms.

A GP will test for other medical problems that can cause tiredness, such as anaemia, thyroid issues, food intolerances or diabetes.

Many cases of TATT are related to mental health problems, such as depression and anxiety. Traumatic life events, stress and money worries can also cause fatigue. Talking therapies can help in these cases, and your doctor may be able to refer you to a counselling service.

If a GP has ruled out more serious underlying causes but you still feel tired, there are lifestyle changes that will help. First make sure

you're getting **enough good quality sleep**. Make it a priority for a few weeks to see how much better you feel. The Royal College of Psychologists' advice is to have both a regular bedtime and wake time, and avoid napping. If you struggle to drop off try a soak in a warm bath before you go to bed because this will make you feel calm, and the drop in body temperature when you exit the bath fools the body to start to prepare for sleep.

Reduce your stress levels by scheduling relaxation time into your day. This could be something as simple as listening to your favourite music or meeting friends for a chat.

A good diet also plays a role in increasing your energy levels. Try eating small snacks throughout the day, rather than one large meal in the evening. Avoid alcohol and drink more water. Cutting caffeine will also help but cut down gradually to minimise the risk of headaches.

Finally, a little light exercise is another proven way to fight fatigue. Even a quick 15-minute walk around the block will give boost your energy.





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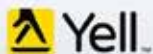
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Why go to the beach in the UK, September, October or even November?

Firstly the beaches are quieter and the sea is at its warmest. Many beaches don't allow your dogs on the beach in summer but come, Autumn, they are.

There are lots of things to do on the beach which doesn't involve sitting in a deck chair and getting wind-blasted. Rockpooling has always been a favourite with youngsters but I'm sure the poor crabs will disagree. I love going to the beach for breakfast, you can't beat a full English and a mug of tea, looking at the scenery. Where do I do this? In Beer, Devon, it's not sandy but pebbles, but very picturesque.

The other activities you can do are sea glass or drift wood collecting, fossil hunting, finding beautiful or unusual pebbles. You may even be lucky enough to find some nice shells. There are amazing places where you can find all types of different sea glass, Lyme Regis, Devon or Seaham in County Durham to name but a couple. The North Yorkshire coast has gorgeous sandy coves and if you're lucky you can find Jet on the beach near Whitby. I love doing all of the above and taking my treasure home, making things from them.

Going to the seaside is never boring because there is so much to enjoy and take part in. Everything I've mentioned costs nothing so for families it's ideal.

Of course there are many activities which you can pay for, paddle boarding, fishing, surfing, coasteering, hiring a boat. If you need any further inspiration, [I'm happy to help you.](#)



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Owner Graham commented

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Valuable VPN!

Use a virtual private network to protect your data

In a coffee shop the other day I took my phone out to catch up on some emails. The customer Wi-Fi was free so of course I connected and started browsing the web. I glanced up at one point and all around me a number of people were busy doing the same thing. It suddenly struck me that everyone was on the same network, so how safe was my information? Then I wondered whether my home was really any safer.

Any time we use the Internet for browsing, watching videos, answering email, or any of our apps, our phone or computer has a digital conversation with other computers. If someone monitors this conversation, they will see what we're looking at, who we're talking to and, if the computer we're talking to isn't secure, our account details and passwords are vulnerable.

Organisations make a lot of money from gathering this sort of information. **It's called Big Data.** Think of those pop-up ads that seem to know exactly the sorts of things we like.

So how can we stop the snoopers?

Using a VPN (Virtual Private Network) is a great solution. This works by using our Internet connection to securely connect us to a VPN server. Hackers can see we've made the connection but can't see anything we're doing. Our device tells the VPN server what we want to do, and it goes on to the Internet to do it for us. It then sends that information back to our device using this secure connection.



This technique has a number of advantages.

All our browsing is carried out by the VPN server. **No one can track our activity back to our computer.** Governments, hackers and websites can only see the VPN server, and these don't keep any records of who was using the system.

Everything we do online instantly becomes fully encrypted. We can connect to public Wi-Fi hotspots without worrying about somebody stealing our information.

Most VPN systems allow connection to servers in different countries. It's then possible to access websites and services as if you were based in that country. However big organisations like Netflix invest a lot of money trying to stop people using VPN connections to get US shows from the UK.

In countries where the Internet is censored, using a VPN can bypass the censorship and allow access the information from forbidden sites.

VPN services cost a few pounds per month to rent. Sometimes internet security software offers the service as part of their package.

So, if you do use lots of public Wi-Fi networks it's well worth the investment. If you're worried about people tracking your online activity and building up a personal profile of your likes and dislikes, then VPN is the easy solution.

By Mark O'Keefe

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COMPETITION



WIN 2 TICKETS

**to see The Hound of the Baskervilles – The Hit Farce
on Saturday 12th October at 2.30pm or 7.30pm
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:

How long does the show last?

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

Closing date for entries is 1st 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.

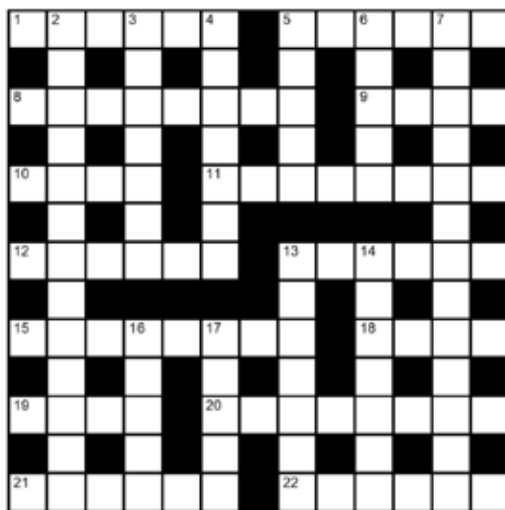
About the show:

This production is a comedy farce that follows Sherlock Holmes and his incomparable sidekick Dr. Jane Watson on their journey from the streets of London to the Devonshire Moors as they attempt to solve the mystery of...The Hound of the Baskervilles!

Arthur Conan Doyle's classic mystery, The Hound of the Baskervilles is brilliantly brought to life on stage in this acclaimed production. This inventive and hilarious comedy mystery features 2 fearless actors playing every role in this fast-paced farce.

This production includes sexual references and innuendo so is aimed at ages 16+.

crossword



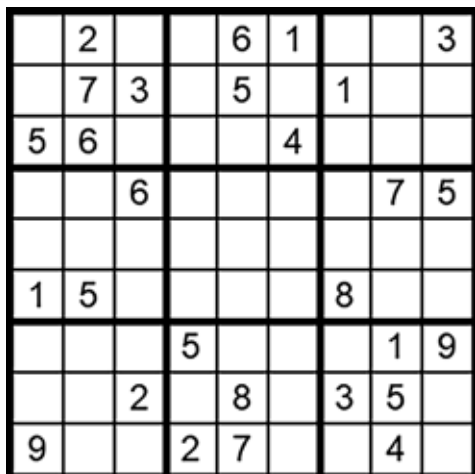
clues

Across

- 1 Designate (6)
- 5 Spooky (6)
- 8 Pitiful, feeble (8)
- 9 Outlay, expenditure (4)
- 10 Adamant (4)
- 11 Pamphlets (8)
- 12 Posture (6)
- 13 Friendlier (6)
- 15 Guarded, protected (8)
- 18 Dock, wharf (4)
- 19 Shadow, stalk (4)
- 20 D.H. _____, author of Sons and Lovers (8)
- 21 Cure, solution (6)
- 22 Vibrate, jangle (6)

Down

- 2 An unexpected affront (4,2,3,4)
- 3 Savage, cruel (7)
- 4 _____ Wood, Hollywood actress (7)
- 5 Chocolate drink (5)
- 6 Transcend, shine (5)
- 7 Children's party game (4,3,6)
- 13 A man whose wife is dead (7)
- 14 Polite demand (7)
- 16 _____ Simmonds, Paralympic swimmer (5)
- 17 Adjourn, postpone (5)



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

Water Works - Why we should all drink more water

Ask most people how much fluid they are supposed to drink in a day, and they will reply "Eight glasses of water." This number has seeped into the public consciousness over the past couple of decades so it might surprise you to know that it has very little basis in science!

However, it is important to stay properly hydrated. Fewer people know that if you feel thirsty you are already dehydrated, and this has a real impact on how your body and brain function.

Dehydration leads to a decrease in our physical performance. Losing just 2% of your body's water content can cause fatigue, problems with temperature control, and make exercise feel more difficult, physically and mentally, and **it's not uncommon for people to lose 6-10% of their body's total water content through sweat during a workout, and as muscle is 80% water this increases muscle stress.**

Our brains are also strongly influenced by hydration. Studies have shown that even mild dehydration impacts brain function. In separate studies of men and women it was found that about 1.5% fluid loss impaired mood and concentration, decreased working memory, and increased feeling of anxiety, fatigue and the frequency of headaches. 1.5% fluid loss can easily occur during normal daily activities, never mind during exercise or hot weather. Worryingly the effects of dehydration are shown to be worse in children and the elderly.

There has been some scientific interest in the effect of increasing hydration on



migraine sufferers. So far, some studies have shown that while keeping hydrated doesn't stop migraines completely, sufferers in the studies reported that the frequency and intensity of the migraines decreased when they were properly hydrated.

Constipation is a common health problem and can be serious in children and the elderly. Low water consumption does appear to be a risk factor in these cases. Some studies have shown that carbonated water seems to help the situation more than still water though scientists haven't yet explained why.

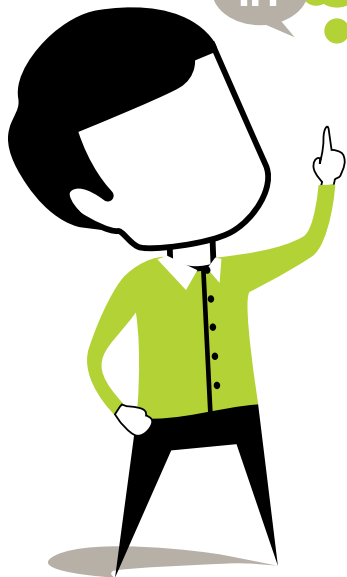
Alcohol acts as a diuretic, so it makes you lose more water than you take in. The dehydration effects of alcohol are responsible for the thirst, fatigue, and headache which inevitably accompany a hangover. It's a good idea to alternated alcoholic drinks with water and to drink a large glass of water before going to sleep, after a night out on the town.

Finally, water both increases satiety and boost metabolism so is great if you're trying to lose weight. Studies show that dieters who drank half a litre of water before each meal lost 44% more weight over a period of 12 weeks.

Try it. Make a real attempt to stay properly hydrated for a week and monitor the results. **You may be surprised.**

By Tracey Anderson

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Breaking Up is Hard to Do

By Sarah Davey

How to move on when a relationship ends

It's painful when a relationship ends, whether the ending is mutual or one-sided. How do you deal with the emotional rollercoaster that inevitably follows a break-up?

Ignore them – Ignore all attempts to Tweet, email, text or otherwise attract your attention. Likewise resist the urge to Tweet, text or email them. Often, we fall back into a bad relationship because it's convenient, and we're too set in a pattern to try something different. Break the cycle.

'Disappear' them – Hide away the stuffed toys, gifts and photos that remind you of them. In the early stages of a break-up it's too easy to cling on to the

nice memories and persuade yourself that you need them back in your life.

Don't stalk them! – Don't drive past their house or haunt places special to both of you. Even if you can't bring yourself to 'unfriend' them on Facebook, at least hide them from your news feed so you won't be tempted to check on them every time you log-on.

Get out – It might be tempting to lie in bed, eating Dairy Milk and listening to Heartbreak FM, but what you really need is company. Ring your most sociable friends and arrange a fun night out.

Make a list – Write down all the reasons you split. Then read them back to yourself whenever you start romanticising the past. Remember, they're your ex for a reason...probably several!



Walnut-Stuffed Baked Apples

Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 30-40 minutes

Ingredients

100g brown sugar
75g walnuts
50g golden raisins
60g unsalted butter, cut into small cubes
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
1/8 teaspoon ground cloves
4 large eating apples (Gala work well)
120ml fresh orange juice

Method

Preheat oven to 190C / Gas mark 5. In a small bowl, combine brown sugar, walnuts, raisins, butter, cinnamon, ginger, nutmeg and

cloves.

Slice about 1cm off the top of each apple. Use a corer or a sharp knife to remove the core and seeds from inside of each apple but take care not to go all the way through.

Arrange the apples, cavity side up, in a ceramic baking dish.

Fill each cavity with 2 tablespoons of the brown sugar-walnut mixture. Sprinkle remaining brown sugar-walnut mixture on top of apples. Pour the orange juice around apples.

Bake the apples for 30 to 40 minutes or until they are tender. Rotate the baking dish halfway through the cooking time.

Spoon the juices in the dish over apples and serve warm with ice cream or creme fraiche.



Serves: 4

Preparation time: 20 minutes

Cooking time: 30-40 minutes

a taster of what's coming up...

CINEMA



Hustlers

from 13th September

This film follows a crew of former strip club employees who band together to turn the tables on their Wall Street clients. Their scheme pays off and the women live a life of decadence and glamour. But when greed gets the best of them, friendships are threatened.

Goldfinch

from 27th September

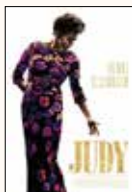
Theodore Decker was 13 years old when his mother was killed in a bombing at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The tragedy changes the course of his life, sending him on a stirring odyssey of grief, reinvention and even love. Through it all, he holds on to one tangible piece of hope from that terrible day... a painting of a tiny bird chained to its perch. The Goldfinch.



Judy

from 4th October

Winter 1968 and showbiz legend Judy Garland arrives in London to perform in a sell-out run at The Talk of the Town. It's 30 years since she shot to global stardom in 'The Wizard Of Oz'. As she prepares for the show, her wit and warmth shine through. Featuring some of her best-known songs, the film celebrates the voice and pizzazz of "the world's greatest entertainer".



The Beach Boys Tribute Band

21st September

The five members of Beach Boys Tribute Band all share a passion for The Beach Boys® music, delivering the songs that everyone loves, from the sheer beauty of God Only Knows to the masterpiece Good Vibrations. Beach Boys Tribute Band deliver a live performance that reflects both their enthusiasm for their work and mastery of a genre.

To book please visit www.cineworld.co.uk

THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull



Supreme Queen

19th September

Now one of the most recognisable tribute bands in the world, SUPREME QUEEN continues to take things to a whole different level, with their homage to the halcyon days of one of the planet's greatest ever rock bands. A stage show designed to provide the most memorable of evenings for Queen's millions of fans.



The Simon and Garfunkel Story

1st October

Using huge projection photos and original film footage, this show features a full live band performing all the hits including 'Mrs Robinson', 'Cecilia', 'Bridge Over Troubled Water' and many more. Get your tickets fast as the last UK tour included sell out shows around the country.

To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Kids' Page

Can you find all the back-to-school words in the grid?



bag	notebook
calculator	PE kit
class	pencil case
computers	playground
desk	ruler
glue stick	school
homework	teacher
lunch	uniform



Class Conundrum

On the first day in their new class, the teacher seats five friends: Max, Pia, Kate, Imran, and Ava on the front row. Max is not next to Kate, Pia is not next to Imran or Kate, neither Kate nor Pia are next to Ava, and Imran sits on Ava's left. Imagine you are the teacher, standing at the front of the class. As you look at the students can you correctly seat the friends from left to right?

Q: Why did the teacher wear sunglasses?
A: Because his class was so bright!

Class Conundrum Solution
 Pia, Max, Ava, Imran, Kate



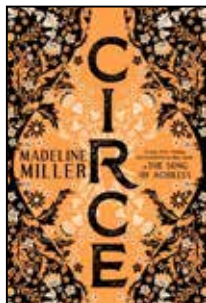
a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

Circe

by Madeline Miller

Stories about the Greek gods have existed for centuries, and in this novel from US author Miller we learn of the story of Circe, a character in Homer's *The Odyssey*, but this time told from her point of view.



Circe is the daughter of the sun god, Helios, but is considered neither beautiful nor powerful, unlike his other children. Shunned by those around her, including her once devoted younger brother Aeetes, Circe is sent alone to an island where she turns to a mortal, Glaucos, whom she falls in love with. Having discovered the power of witchcraft she brews a potion to turn Glaucos into a god so she can marry him. However, her plans go awry, and her revenge leads her to be hated and despised by both mortals and gods.

Circe has been a fascination for authors since the time of Homer and has influenced such writers as James Joyce and Margaret Atwood. In this novel Miller breathes new life into her, along with other figures such as Medea, Achilles, and Zeus: a mixture of legendary Titans, Olympians, and mortals. Woven into the story are familiar legends such as the Minotaur in the labyrinth, and Icarus, who flew too close to the sun. With such a large cast of characters it would have been helpful if the publishers had provided a crib sheet so the reader might remember who is who, but this is a story well worth persevering with.

Goggle-Eyes

by Anne Fine

Kitty is known for one thing amongst her teachers at school – she can tell a great story. When a girl in her class, Helen, storms out of a lesson one morning, the teacher sends Kitty after her to make sure she is okay. Puzzled, as she is not her friend, Kitty soon realises why she has been selected. It is because of Goggle-Eyes.



Goggle-Eyes is a man who her mother started dating. Kitty hated everything about him. The way he was at their house all of the time. The way he moaned about the fact that her room wasn't tidy. The way her younger sister, Jude, liked him. And especially the way he disagreed with her mother's membership of CND.

Ensnared in a cupboard over the course of three hours Kitty tells Helen all about Goggle-Eyes. It is just what Helen needs to hear because her mother too is seeing a man who she hates. But will Kitty and Goggle-Eyes ever reach a truce? Can Kitty offer Helen hope? This classic novel from the 1980s is just as relevant today as more children deal with divorce, remarriage and blended families.

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 0845 850 1451

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

SILHILL

Mike Gough

Tel: 07480 253181

Michael.gough@solihull.gov.uk

Peter Hogarth MBE

Tel: 0121 705 5455

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Robert Hulland

Tel: 0121 707 0493

rhulland@solihull.gov.uk

ST ALPHEGE

Stuart Davis

Tel: 01564 776293

sdavis@solihull.gov.uk

Joe Tildesley

Tel: 0121 705 3086

joetildesley@solihull.gov.uk

Kate Wild

Tel: 07917 550 644

kawild@solihull.gov.uk

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

local police contact for Solihull

Solihull police station

Telephone: 0845 113 5000



Bathrooms

14	Bathrooms Galore	0121 783 9966
28	EH Smith	0121 713 7100

Car Services

1	Sell Your Car 2 Jack	0121 296 3829
9	Crossroads Service Station	01564 703 225
20	AP Alloys	07972 852 758

Care Services

7	Home Instead	0121 270 4615
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Carpets

40	Don Mander	01564 700 200
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Doors

12	Garolla garage doors	0121 369 0774
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Drives

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

Fascias & Gutters

5	Proline	0800 956 1315
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Financial planners

2	Jamieson Christie	01676 532 210
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Garden Services

8	Solihull Tree Care	03335 775 733
10	Dimension Landscape & Driveways	0121 733 1463
15	Central Drives & Landscapes	07748 577 687
39	Oakland Group	01564 758 608

Graphic and Website Design

29	Hotlobster Design Ltd	0121 369 1977
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Handyman Services

25	Prestige Multi-Trades	07886 922 280
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Heating

9	Stephen Smith Heating & Plumbing	01564 200 119
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Insurance

21	Cygnat Insurance	0121 693 0570
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Kitchens

3	Granite Transformations	01926 675 230
5	No Thirty One	01564 770 587
19	Dream Doors	0121 744 8974
22	EH Smith	0121 713 7100

Plumbing

9	Stephen Smith Heating & Plumbing	01564 200 119
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Roofing

7	C Stevens Roofing	0121 733 1276
24	Prestige Multi-Trades	07886 922 280
40	N Bird & Son	0800 195 6946

Travel Agent

16	Not Just Travel	07565 534 524
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4	2	9	7	6	1	5	8	3
8	7	3	9	5	2	1	6	4
5	6	1	8	3	4	7	9	2
2	3	6	4	1	8	9	7	5
7	9	8	6	2	5	4	3	1
1	5	4	3	9	7	8	2	6
3	8	7	5	4	6	2	1	9
6	4	2	1	8	9	3	5	7
9	1	5	2	7	3	6	4	8

Sudoku Solution

from page 27

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

Crossword Solution

from page 27



Mindbenders Solution

from page 16

The privet hedge

By Rachael Leverton

One of the questions I'm often asked as a gardener is 'How do I trim my privet hedge?'

Privet hedges aren't a particularly sexy subject for a gardening article, but hedge-trimming seems to cause a lot of angst so let me tackle it here.

Privet is one of our most popular hedging plants. It has dense foliage which is green all year round, and it's hardy which means it's suited to a wide range of planting sites. It's also available in a selection of varieties and root types, so there's a Privet hedge to suit most gardens.

Autumn is a good time to trim them because there's little chance of disturbing any birds who might be nesting in them. **Nesting season generally runs from March to early August.**

If you have a small hedge like those outside terraced town houses, then hand-held hedge shears are fine, but for large hedges an electric or even a petrol hedge-trimmer is definitely easier. If you have one, give it a check over and make sure it's sharp and well lubricated.

Safety should be paramount. Wear safety goggles and sturdy gloves. It's not overkill. I once spent Saturday afternoon in eye casualty because a small sharp twig flew into my eye while I was trimming a hedge. It hurt and took ages to heal properly so be warned. Before starting, remove any potential



obstacles on the ground which might prove to be a trip hazard. **Avoid using powered tools above shoulder height; instead use a sturdy step ladder set on stable ground.** If your hedge trimmer is electric use a residual current device (RCD) for safety purposes, and don't use it in damp conditions. One little trick I learned at a hedge-cutting course a few years ago is to cut hedges so that they are slightly tapered on both sides. This will mean the base is wider than the top and light can reach the bottom of the hedge, which means the hedge will be greener and look healthier.

Top tips to ensure an even, symmetrical hedge:

Straight edges are difficult to cut by eye. Use a taut horizontal string tied between two stout canes to act as a guide so you can cut the top of the hedge level. For vertical lines use canes or stakes pushed into the ground.

When using shears, ensure that the top of the hedge is cut level and flat by keeping the blades of the shears parallel to the line of the hedge.

When using a hedge trimmer, keep the blade parallel to the hedge and use a wide, sweeping action working from the bottom of the hedge upwards, so that the cut foliage falls away.

Happy Gardening,

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