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Court queues leave bereaved families in 'limbo'

From house sales collapsing to investments plummeting in value – civil service delays are causing huge disruption and emotional anguish to bereaved families trying to administer estates, explains Hannah Tait, partner at Solihull-based law firm Shakespeare Martineau.

What is probate?

After someone passes away, a grant of probate is a vital step to allowing the executors legal control over the deceased's estate. Without it, families can be left unable to sell their loved one's home or access their bank account to distribute the estate and their inheritance to the beneficiaries.

HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) has been working with huge backlogs in processing probate applications since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. While delays are improving, executors can still expect a 16-week wait before they are issued their grant of probate, according to the latest data.

What the delays mean for families

These delays are, rightly, causing huge frustration and anxiety for bereaved families who are having to pay the price as a result of faults within the system.

We've seen clients losing out on property sales as buyers have been unwilling to put up with the long wait times for a grant of probate to be issued, which is needed before a sale can be legally completed. Due to stock market volatility arising from the war in Ukraine, we've also seen a deceased clients' investment portfolios significantly lose value as executors have had to wait for the grant to be issued before being able to sell the shares.

These lengthy delays are exhausting for grieving families, who are already going through a difficult time dealing with their loss and trying to sort out the complex administration related to the death of a loved one. They are being left in limbo.

What can families do?

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut or way to avoid the delays when applying for grant of probate. The onus is on the government to come up with a way to get through the backlog and speed up the current process. In the meantime, we recommend seeking legal assistance with the estate administration to ensure the application is carefully prepared, and completed and submitted correctly and taking advice during lifetime to ensure that assets are held correctly and to ensure the process is as seamless as possible.

Longer term, if clients are keen to avoid problems in the future, we recommend they seek legal advice, have joint accounts, and make sure their pensions' expressions of wishes and insurance nominations are up to date.



For more information and support call 0330 024 0333
email hannah.tait@shma.co.uk or visit www.shma.co.uk

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Summertime!

Welcome to the July edition

At the time of writing this the sky is distinctly overcast but here's hoping by the time this reaches you we are firmly in Summertime!

After all, there's loads of great places to visit in the local area, which are so much more enjoyable if the sun's shining. If you want some inspiration on what's on in the area, then head to page 6 where you can find out about fun runs and doggy brunches.

Wishing you a great month ahead. Until next month,

Zoe

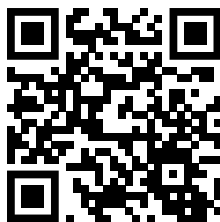
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community events



The Motown Divas Party with The Dreamettes

28th July, Nailcote Hall, Berkswell

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Doggy Brunch

29th July, The Limes, Earlswood, Solihull

CALLING ALL DOG OWNERS. Put Saturday 29th July 2023

in your diary 11am – 2pm. The Limes first DOGGY BRUNCH is coming and you cannot miss out! They will have the pawsecco flowing and the doggy beer on draught – Dogs eat free with every Brunch paying human! TICKETS are FREE but please register at eventbrite.com

Now That's What I Call 90s

4th August, The Lake at Barston, Barston, Solihull

90s BANGERS – Dance classics meet pop anthems – Rhythm is a dancer, 2 can play that game, Free from desire, What is Love?, I love you baby, No Limits, Let me be your fantasy plus, Keep on Moving, Cotton Eye Joe, Venga party, Mysterious Girl etc. Tickets start from £27 and include a 3 course Meal: see www.thelakeatbarston.co.uk

Ricky Gervais

4th September, Utilita Arena Birmingham

The one and only Ricky Gervais brings his newest live show Armageddon to Birmingham! Gervais is an award-winning stand-up comedian, with six international tours to date. His live stand up show 'Fame' became the fastest selling UK stand-up show in history. Tickets from www.utilitaarenabham.co.uk/

Balsall Common Fun Run

17th September

This local community fundraising event, now in its ninth year, is organised by local charity The Lily Mae Foundation, to enable participants to run in support of local and national charities and good causes. There are Mini Runs for nursery and primary aged children, 5K runs for Juniors and Families, and 5K and 10K Runs for Adults. To book your place please visit: www.stuweb.co.uk/event/4258

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Fri 29th 	STRICTLY ABBA PARTY	£40.00

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Fri 6th 	MOTOWN PARTY	£40.00
Fri 13th 	TAKE THAT PARTY	£45.00
Fri 20th 	ELTON JOHN TRIBUTE SHOW	£40.00
Fri 27th 	DAYTON GREY SOUL PARTY	£40.00

NOVEMBER 2023

Fri 10th 	ELVIS TRIBUTE SHOW	£40.00
Sat 18th 	FREDDIE MERCURY SHOW	£45.00
Sat 25th 	THE 'SNOWBALL' 	£49.50

DECEMBER 2023

Fri 1st 	CHARTBUSTER PARTY	£52.50
Fri 1st 	BACK TO THE 90'S PARTY	£57.50
Sat 2nd 	SOUL & MOTOWN PARTY	£57.50
Fri 8th 	WHITNEY HOUSTON TRIBUTE	£52.50
Fri 8th 	CHRISTMAS PARTY	SOLD OUT
Sat 9th 	TAKE THAT SPECTACULAR	£57.50
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a good read

By Natasha Donovan

Tangerine

by Christine Mangan

Tangerine is a gripping psychological thriller set in the 1950s that follows the tumultuous friendship between two women, Alice Shipley and Lucy Mason, and the dark secrets that bind them.

Alice Shipley is a fragile and reclusive young woman who resides in Tangier, Morocco, with her husband, John. She is haunted by a tragic incident from her college days. One day she receives an unexpected visit from Lucy Mason, her former roommate and estranged friend, whom she hasn't seen in over a year.

Lucy's arrival triggers a series of unsettling events. Alice is plunged into a state of paranoia and uncertainty over her visitor's ambiguous intentions and begins to question Lucy's motives. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that both Alice and Lucy are harbouring secrets and that their past is deeply intertwined.

When something momentous happens under suspicious circumstances, tensions escalate and Alice must confront the truth about her past, the nature of her friendship with Lucy, and the true identity of the people around her.

Mangan skilful storytelling delves into themes of obsession, identity, and betrayal. The intense atmosphere of *Tangier* serves as a backdrop for the complex relationship between Alice and Lucy. A gripping cat-and-mouse game unfolds, with high stakes, and a shocking revelation.

Tangerine is a gripping and atmospheric thriller that explores the dark corners of friendship and the consequences of deceit.



The Buried Crown

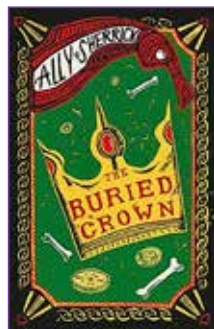
by Ally Sherrick

The year is 1940, and George Penny is evacuated from London to live with his Aunt May in the countryside. While exploring the nearby ruins of an old castle, George discovers a hidden underground chamber. Inside, he stumbles upon a medieval crown that belonged to King Alfred the Great, the legendary English king.

But George soon realizes that the crown is more than just a relic. It is rumoured to possess mystical powers and is sought after by a group of sinister individuals, known as the Skull brothers, who are determined to use it for their own nefarious purposes.

With the help of a brave and resourceful girl named Kitty, George embarks on a dangerous quest to keep the crown safe from the Skull brothers. Along the way, they encounter secret codes, ancient riddles, and unexpected allies. Their journey takes them across the English countryside, from hidden tunnels to perilous cliffs, as they race against time to protect the crown and prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.

As George and Kitty unravel the secrets surrounding the crown, they uncover a deeper connection to King Alfred and his legacy. The fate of the crown becomes intertwined with their own personal journeys of courage, friendship, and discovering the true meaning of heroism. Sherrick's fast-paced prose writing will keep her young readers on the edge of their seats.





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Summer Tech!

If you want to be the host with the most this summer I have two recommendations for you.

First up is the Ooni Karu 12, a multi-fuel outdoor pizza oven. This portable pizza oven, which can be fired by wood or gas was the hit of our summer last year. We used ours for a backyard birthday, two camping trips, at the beach and random summer Saturdays. The pizzas are delicious with an authentic stone-baked taste, while the fact its multi-fuel provides flexibility and convenience.

It had surprisingly high heat retention for its size and price which resulted in perfectly crispy crusts and delectably melted toppings. It definitely made us feel like accomplished hosts, and everyone enjoyed topping their own pizzas. Highly recommended.

Next I want to give a shout out to the Ninja CREAMi Ice Cream & Frozen Dessert Maker. I was gifted one for my birthday by my husband who knows I am an ice-cream-aholic. It's not cheap at nearly £200 but when you consider that a small tub of Ben and Jerry's is now

Take pizza to the next level

around £5 it will pay for itself in 20 weeks at one tub a week... and we are definitely more than a one tub a week family!

NOTE I am not affiliated with either company. These are my own recommendations.





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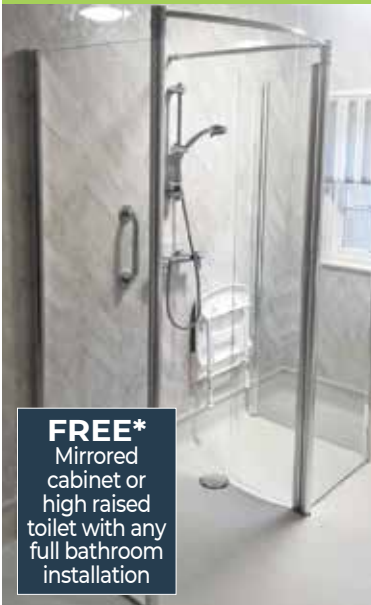
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answers on page 22

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Choose the right sunhat

When it comes to protecting ourselves from the harmful effects of the sun, a reliable sunhat is an indispensable accessory. While fashion may play a role in our choice, it is crucial to prioritize the protective aspects of your head gear.

Wide Brim: A wide brim helps shield your face, neck, and ears from direct sunlight, minimizing the risk of sunburn and long-term damage caused by UV radiation. Opt for a hat with a brim that extends at least three

inches (7.5cm) all around, providing ample coverage.

UPF (Ultraviolet Protection Factor) Rating: Did you know that any hat marketed as a 'sunhat' has to have a UPF rating? UPF measures the level of UV radiation that can penetrate the fabric. Look for sunhats with a high UPF rating, ideally, one with a UPF rating of 50+ as this will block more than 98% of harmful UV rays.

Fit: Finally make sure you choose the right size! A too-tight hat can cause a headache, while one that's too loose can be annoying. If

you plan to be out in the wind look for hats with adjustable chin straps or drawstrings. People with thin hair are more susceptible to sun-related skin cancers on their head. A good sunhat can save your life.



A Delightfully Quirky Affair

Pack up a hamper, it's National Picnic Month!

Ah, the British picnic! That delightful tradition combining outdoor dining with unpredictable weather, and an assortment of eccentricities. The main ingredients for a truly traditional British picnic are, a dash of optimism, a splash of stoicism, a sprinkling of humour and a tiny pinch of disappointment. First and foremost, there is the weather dance. No discussion about picnics in our green and pleasant land would be complete without someone looking upwards dubiously, sucking their cheeks in, and saying, 'Looks like rain.' As a nation we have mastered the art of packing for all four seasons in a single picnic basket. From sweltering sun to sudden showers, we

have evolved into experts at adaptive picnic planning. If there was an 'official British Picnic checklist' it would include sunscreen, insect repellent, a thick sweater an umbrella and a pac-a-mac! Every Brit is born knowing exactly what a picnic should look like: a wicker hamper, a checked picnic blanket, and an array of finger foods including dainty cucumber sandwiches, iced buns and freshly baked scones with clotted cream and jam, all washed down with ginger beer. This is because Enid Blyton and her Famous Five have somehow entered our collective subconscious, but we have been cruelly lied to. In reality it's usually slightly curled ham and cheese sandwiches dispensed from a Tupperware tub along with a packet of crisps, some soggy custard creams, and

lukewarm orange squash or (equally lukewarm) wine for the grown-ups. Games are compulsory at a British picnic. People whose idea of exercise for the rest of the year is getting up from the sofa to answer the front door, suddenly get all competitive and suggest a game of rounders, or croquet, or French cricket! This quickly descends into arguments about who is on which team, who gets (or shouldn't get) Grandma, and whether there should be second chances at hitting a ball. But it's all about the friendly competition and the odd black eye is just part of the fun. But us Brits know that all the shenanigans is just a warm-up for the main event. As the afternoon rolls on, the time nears for the one British tradition everyone looks forward to, Pimms o'clock. This refreshing cocktail, filled with fruits, herbs, and a splash of gin, is the quintessential picnic libation. As the glasses clink and laughter fills the air, the true spirit of the British picnic finally comes alive. It's a time to relax, enjoy the company of friends and loved ones, and revel in the joy of this whimsical outdoor affair.





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Choose the perfect pair of summer shorts

When I was a teen I was convinced I shouldn't wear shorts unless I was a skinny size 6. As an adult I now know that's total rubbish. There are shorts for every size and shape, the trick is to pick the right pair for you. A style that flatters your body shape and enhances your best



features will make you feel confident and comfortable.

Pear-Shape: Your hips are wider than your shoulders and you probably have a neat waist, so choose shorts with a slight flare or A-line silhouette. These will help to balance your proportions. Look for mid-rise shorts that sit on the natural waist, as they accentuate the waistline and create a nice hourglass. Styles without pockets look more slimline.

Hourglass: The hourglass shape is supposedly ideal but Women with an hourglass figure can feel self-conscious in skimpier summer clothes, especially if they are curvier.

If you are longer-waisted, high-waisted shorts are particularly flattering, as they accentuate the waistline and highlight your curves without creating bulges. Shorter-waisted hourglass figures often feel 'cut-in half' when they wear shorts, especially if they have a fuller bust, so opt for shorts without a defined waistband, and wear a slightly fitted top that doesn't need to be tucked in. A-line styles or skorts work really well with this shape.

By embracing your body shape and choosing shapes that flatter, you'll rock your shorts with confidence this summer.

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COMPETITION



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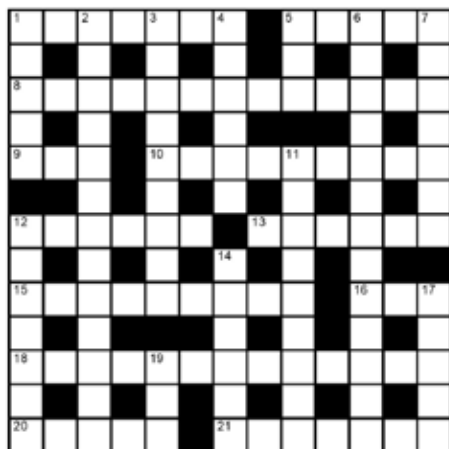


If you like your blues/rock played with more psychedelic experience and imagination than most, The Melvin Hancox Band should not be missed. Melvin has had material played on the BBC, on Rick Wakeman's Planet Rock Show, and has appeared on live sessions on mainstream national radio. Through various permutations he has worked with Ray Phillips, Savoy Brown, Canned Heat, Kex Gorin: Magnum's Mick Bonham (yes related) and Ace Kefford, whilst going on to write, produce and release six highly original albums fronting his own trio as well as solo offerings.

How to enter

For your chance to win, email zoe@dorridgedirectory.com with the subject line Melvin and you will be added to our database to receive our monthly e-newsletter about offers and events in Solihull. The winners will be notified by email after the closing date of 10 August 2023. There is no cash value nor exchanges for the prizes.

crossword



Down

- 1 Aquatic birds (5)
- 2 Advertising worn by a person (8,5)
- 3 Hormone produced at night (9)

- 4 Small lump of gold (6)
- 5 Ocean (3)
- 6 Transferring from public ownership (13)
- 7 Bothered, miffed (7)

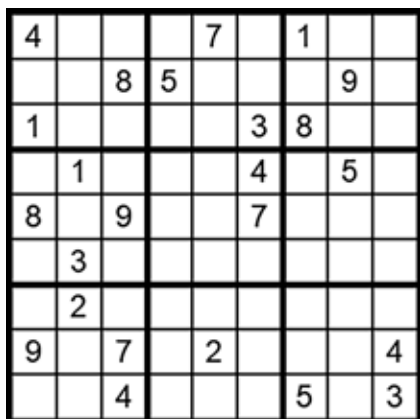
- 11 Lecture hall (9)
- 12 Finery (7)
- 14 Hijinks (6)
- 17 Big cat (5)
- 19 Place somewhere (3)

clues

Across

- 1 Refuse Collector (7)
- 5 Brown ink (5)
- 8 Destructive fire, blaze (13)
- 9 Hand tool (3)
- 10 Church state (9)
- 12 Speeding, competing (6)
- 13 Diverse (6)
- 15 Freak out, lose it (2,7)
- 16 Social insect (3)
- 18 Condition caused by toxic paint and dust (4,9)
- 20 Inspection, investigation (5)
- 21 Conference, discussion (7)

answer on page 22



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 22

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local police contact for solihull

Solihull Police Station: 0845 113 5000 or 101

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



Sudoku Solution

from page 20



crossword Solution

from page 20

Solution to Mind benders

1. Up to you
2. Afternoon tea
3. Multiple choice

mindbenders

from page 12

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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