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for residents of solihull



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happy new year!

Welcome to the January issue of The Solihull Index.

So if one of your new year's resolutions is to try new things then check out our local events page to see what's happening in the area, including folk dancing and a ballroom dancing workshop.

Or if you're not feeling quite so active, check out what's coming up at the cinema and the Core Theatre this month (see page 26). There's some great new films and shows out and it's nice to get out the house and beat those Winter blues!

The Solihull Index is also full of local suppliers who can help you with anything from cars and cleaning to drives and dentists, and many other things in between! They are all based locally and would love your support.

Wishing you all a happy and healthy 2018.

Zoe

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

www.solihullindex.com



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As we are also Architects, we tend to think through our solutions creatively, at times from a perspective that is not immediately apparent. As Arboriculturists, we work together where tree issues meet planning issues, such as Tree Preservation Orders.

community events

Friendly Folk – folk dance group

**Elmdon Heath Community Centre,
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Monday evenings:

7.45 – 10.15pm

Folk dance group established in Solihull for 30 years. Folk dancing is an activity which combines physical and mental exercise in a sociable atmosphere. Friendly Folk welcomes newcomers of any, or no, experience, with or without a partner. Cost £3.50 per week, 1st week free. Call 0121 444 1492 for more details.

Solihull Energy Healing Group

**Byron Room, Core Library, Solihull
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minutes of energy healing to the public for Relaxation and Stress Relief. The sessions are FREE but donations are gratefully accepted to cover our costs. Call 0121 704 3735 for more information.

Well Being Taster Afternoon

**Solihull Well Being Clinic,
15 Highfield Road, Hall
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Saturday 27th January 1-4pm

See in 2018 with some excellent taster treatments - choose from reflexology, tai chi, reiki healing, mindfulness, acupuncture, indian head massage or meditation. For just £15, we will offer you TWO TREATMENTS (lasting 15 mins each), to really put the bounce into your step, as you start off the New Year. Places are limited, so book soon (0121 777 1675) to avoid disappointment.

Mum2Mum Market

**Renewal Family Centre, Vulcan
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Saturday 27th January

10.30am – 12.30pm

We offer sellers the chance to de-clutter and make some money from outgrown baby and children's items and the chance for buyers to grab some amazing bargains. £2 entry for adults, children are free. Visit www.mum2mummarket.co.uk for more details.

Model Railway Exhibition

**St Mary's Church Hall,
Hobs Meadow, Hobs
Moat, Solihull B92 8PN**

Saturday 10th February

10am – 4pm

G scale indoors plus guest layouts in other scales over 2 halls. Trade support. Refreshments available. Free parking. Adults £3, children (5-16 years) £1. For more details please visit www.gscalesociety.com

Strictly Ballroom Dance Workshop

Saturday 17th February

11am -3.30pm

**Land Rover Sports & Social
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If you've always wanted to learn all the fabulous dances seen on TV, but don't have time to commit to a weekly dance class then Donaheys's Learn to Ballroom Dance in a Day workshop is for you! With 4 hours of expert tuition geared towards absolute beginners, you'll enjoy learning some of the most popular ballroom dances seen on BBC Strictly Come Dancing. You'll learn the Waltz, Foxtrot, Cha Cha & Jive. To book please visit www.donaheys.co.uk/classes/learn-to-dance-in-a-day/

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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.

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burns night

Robert Burns was a Scottish bard, born in 1759 who wrote many poems and lyrics during his life. His most famous work is probably Auld Lang Syne, sang at New Year and which translates as 'times long past'. Burns is one of Scotland's most important cultural icons as many of his works addressed the political and civil issues of the time.

Robert Burns' friends and acquaintances held the first Burns supper on July 21, the anniversary of his death, in the late 1700s. This date was later changed to January 25th, which marks his birthday. Burns suppers gradually became a tradition and are now held by people and organizations with Scottish origins worldwide.

At Burns Night events, many men and women wear kilts or other clothes made from their family tartan. At the centre of the supper is the

haggis, which brought to the table to the tune of bagpipes. For the uninitiated haggis is a savoury pudding containing 'sheep's pluck' (the heart, liver, and lungs of the animal) which are minced with onion, oatmeal, suet, spices, stock and salt, then encased in the animal's stomach - though artificial casings are more commonly used now. It can be baked or boiled and although it sounds quite revolting is surprisingly delicious, at least to this author! It's served with a whisky sauce and some neeps and tatties - a mixture of swede and potato which works beautifully with the rough, oaty haggis. Cranachan is the traditional desert of cream, raspberries and oatmeal. It should all be washed down with a good whisky.

Have a great Burns night. Gun cuireadh do chupa thairis le slainte agus sonas. (Translation: May your cup overflow with health and happiness)

January

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fit not thin in 2018

Many people will make a resolution to lose weight in 2018. To be fair lots of us made the same resolution on January 1st 2017...and 2016...

What if we're looking at it all wrong? What if a better resolution was to get fit in 2018? Fit not thin.

I'm not saying you shouldn't aim to lose weight. If your knees buckle when you try to stand up and you have a family history of cardiovascular disease maybe you should. But maybe that family history of cardiovascular disease should prompt you to think more strategically.

Obesity is linked to cardiovascular disease but that's not the whole story. Lack of fitness also plays a role. Tackle the fitness and a side effect may be that you also tackle the obesity. And seriously, getting fit is way more fun than dieting. A friend once told me about the shift in her mindset when she decided to focus on fit not thin. "As I got fitter I became more than I was before. Whenever I'd tried to lose weight in the past I'd focussed on being less. That was the main difference for me."

Personally I think that if society paid more attention to fitness rather than weight loss, we'd actually have less obesity. If we (especially women) focussed on how far we could run or cycle, or how many push-ups we can do, we would naturally be more active and less obese because focussing on fitness actually makes weight loss easier. The fitter you get the more you view food as fuel and the more you want to eat high quality nutritious food because it helps you get fitter. It's positive reinforcement.

And let's be honest, society is horribly biased against fat people. But if fitness was the Holy Grail we wouldn't automatically assume that not-thin equates to not-healthy. We need to stop being obsessed with weight-loss and thinness. If we get



involved in more conversations about fitness rather than how to lose extra pounds, our fat-bias would diminish and maybe more overweight people would feel comfortable joining the gym or that exercise class they always fancied.

Both fat and thin people would be healthier if they aimed for fitness rather than thinness. Even if overweight people stay overweight weight, they still get all the protective benefits of exercise. And there are many thin people who are terribly unfit and are at risk of cardiovascular disease. Thin does not always or even often equate to healthy, in spite of popular myth.

It's not an either-or situation but if you only aim to end 2018 thinner you might succeed, you might not, but you'll still be unfit. If you aim for fitness you will probably lose weight, gain confidence, friends, a new skill or two, and in the words of my friend be more than you were by the end of the year. I know which route I'm going to take.

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a taster of what's on in january & february ...

CINEMA

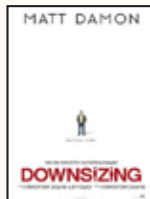
The Post from 19th January

'The Post' chronicles the efforts of the Washington Post's publisher and editor to get the Pentagon Papers – classified documents about a US government cover-up of its actions in Vietnam – published. Steven Spielberg marshals an all-star cast including Tom Hanks and Meryl Streep for this incredible true story about fighting for the truth at all costs.



being hugely beneficial for the environment, money goes much further in a downsized world, and the promise of a better life is too much to pass up. As Paul and Audrey move in to their new community, little do they know that life-changing adventures are in store for them.

To book please visit
www.cineworld.co.uk



Coco from 19th January

'Coco' follows the adventures of a 12-year-old boy named Miguel, who finds himself in the Land of the Dead while on a quest to prove his talent as a musician. His family has banned music for generations, but Miguel is determined to defy them. But when he's magically transported to the vibrant and colourful Land of the Dead, he sets out to discover the true story of his family's history.



THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull
(formerly Solihull Arts Complex)



Blake Friday 26th January

Hot on the heels of Il Divo and Collabro, British award-winning Blake return with another uplifting show of fabulous harmonies. Inspired by the lush trio harmonies of The Three Tenors and The Bee Gees they'll perform from their pop classical albums with an eclectic mix of classical, pop, rock and musical harmony plus their super on stage banter.

Magical Mozart

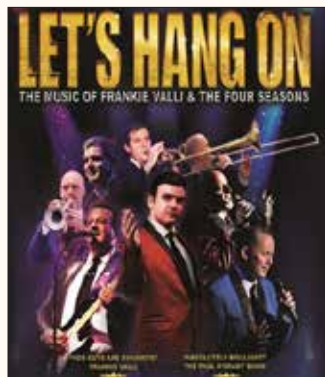
Wednesday 31st January
From the producers of A Viennese Strauss Gala, this sumptuous fully costumed show immerses us in the wonderful music and the classical baroque world of one of the world's



greatest romantic composers. With beautiful settings, costumes, lighting, and of course candles, the European Baroque Ensemble and world class opera singers transport you back to the sumptuous past.

Let's Hang On Friday 2nd & Saturday 3rd February

Back by popular demand - showcasing the music of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Discover how four New Jersey boys from the



wrong side of the tracks invented their own sound, wrote their own songs, and became one of the biggest pop sensations of all time!

To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk



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forget brain-training, learn an instrument

We are told we need to keep our brains active

as we age, to help stave off cognitive decline and the risk of dementia. A whole industry has grown up around this, and we are urged to buy the latest brain-training apps and books. Yet research has thrown doubt on a lot of the hype surrounding these, with many now dismissed as useless gimmicks.

But there is robust scientific evidence which shows that learning to play a musical instrument is not just beneficial to children: adults benefit too and it may even be helpful to patients recovering from brain injuries.

Playing a musical instrument is a rich and complex experience that involves integrating information from the senses of vision, hearing, and touch, as well as fine movements. Musical training can induce long-lasting changes in the brain. Professional musicians are highly skilled individuals who spend years training, so they provide a natural laboratory in which neuroscientists can study how such changes – called experience-dependent plasticity – occur across their lifespan.

Early brain scanning studies revealed significant differences in brain structure between musicians and non-musicians of the same age. For example, the corpus callosum, a massive bundle of nerve fibres connecting the two sides of the brain, is significantly larger in musicians, and the brain



areas involved in movement, hearing, and visuo-spatial abilities also appear to be larger.

Longitudinal studies (which track people over time) have shown that young children who undertake 14 months musical training exhibit significant structural and functional brain changes compared to those who do not. Learning to play a musical instrument not only increases

grey matter volume in various brain regions, but also strengthens the long-range connections between those regions. Other research shows that musical training enhances verbal memory, spatial reasoning, and literacy skills: professional musicians usually outperform non-musicians in these areas.

More recently, it has become clear that musical training facilitates the rehabilitation of patients recovering from stroke and other forms of brain damage. It also seems to have a protective effect against the onset of dementia.

One problem with commercial brain training products is that they only improve performance on the skills involved; musical training on the other hand has what psychologists refer to as transfer effects; in other words, learning to play a musical instrument seems to have a far broader effect on the brain and mental function, and improves other abilities that are seemingly unrelated, such as working memory and language.

Learning to play an instrument strengthens the brain in a way that nothing else does, so put down the Sudoku and pick up your ukulele. You know it makes sense.

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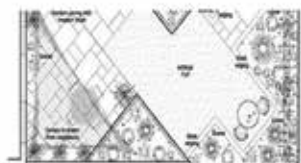
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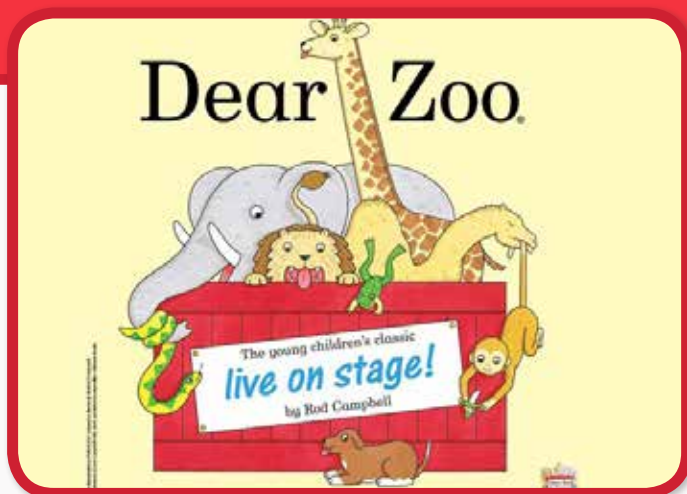
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COMPETITION



WIN 4 tickets

to see **Dear Zoo**

Tuesday 20th February at 2pm

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

For your chance to win these tickets, worth £50, visit the Core Theatre website page for this event - www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk - to find the answer to this question:

Who is the author of dear Zoo?

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

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

About the Show:

Join Ben...and his friend Sally...as they wait to see what the Zoo will send when they get Ben's letter asking for a pet. All kinds of familiar animals big and small arrive... but will they make a good pet? Well.... wait and see!

This production will delight all those who have read the book (both young and old) as it unfolds with child-engaging puppets, music and lots of audience interaction. Dear Zoo has delighted generations of young readers since it was first published in 1982, and has sold more than 8 million copies worldwide

a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

The Earth Hums in B Flat

by Mari Strachan

Gweni Morgan is twelve, and every night she flies in her sleep – over the town and the countryside around, looking down on familiar and not so familiar scenes. She thinks she remembers flying while awake as a small child, but somehow she has lost the ability to do so, no matter how hard she tries. And she daren't try too hard, because Mam doesn't like any reminders that Gwenni might not be the same as everyone else. Set in rural Wales in the 1950s, Strachan's debut novel follows Gwenni as the disappearance of a local man begins a chain of events, which reveal some of the secrets that lie under the surface of everyday life.

The novel works in a number of ways. On the one hand, it is at times a darkly comic portrayal of small town Wales. On the other, it is a story about families, their secrets and the after effects of war. What holds these strands together is Gwenni herself as narrator, who sees more than she understands, and whose innocence is captured perfectly in Strachan's often understated prose style.

The supporting characters are equally well drawn – from highly strung Mam, to kind, patient Tada, from the mysterious Auntie Lol, to Alwenna, Gwenni's best friend, old beyond her years and 'with no shame!' Although the solution to the main mystery of the story is clear to the reader from the outset, Strachan holds back just enough to keep us guessing at the other strands which she brings together for the conclusion – I guarantee she will keep you reading until the end.



Clown

by Quentin Blake

Can you tell a story without words? Well, Quentin Blake can, and in *Clown* he does.

The book consists entirely of illustrations, in Blake's well loved and instantly recognisable style. Our hero, Clown, finds himself thrown into the dustbin, along with a number of other toys. He escapes, dusts himself off, and sets out to find someone who can help him to rescue his friends. Along the way he finds himself in a fancy dress competition, entertaining a rather fierce looking dog, and possibly finding himself a home – all without words. The beauty of the story is that while Blake's illustrations carry the narrative forward, the reader can choose their own way of telling it. No two versions are ever the same, as each child brings to the book their own language and rhythms. Clown himself is wonderfully expressive, and the pictures are enough to have you laughing out loud in several places.

An absolutely marvellous book, which every child should read – and which every adult will enjoy too.



Overnight Oats

Have you made healthier eating a part of your New Year plan?

If so you should definitely try this healthy, hearty breakfast. A friend introduced me to overnight oats and I have to say I'm hooked.



First, it's the easiest breakfast ever. There's nothing to cook; you make it the night before in under 5 minutes, and when you wake up, it's there waiting. All you have to do is eat it!

The basic recipe is very adaptable; you can do so many different things with it. I tend to eat mine cold but if you like things hot, heat them up in the microwave. Oats help to reduce cholesterol and are a whole, unprocessed source of carbohydrates, which release energy slowly so are a great start to the day.

Basic Overnight Oats Ingredients

1/2 cup dry oats (the actual cup size doesn't really matter. It's about proportions...just use a bigger cup if you have a bigger appetite)

1 cup of unsweetened milk (I like almond milk but cows' milk, soya milk, plain yoghurt or a mix of yoghurt and milk is all good)

Fruit of choice (fresh, frozen or even tinned)

1 tbsp chia seeds or flax seeds (optional but good for

healthy omega 3 fats)

Nuts (optional)

Method

1. Combine everything into an airtight bowl or jar (I leave nuts out as I like them crunchy)
2. Leave in the fridge overnight
3. Eat in the morning! You can heat them if you like.

Variations:

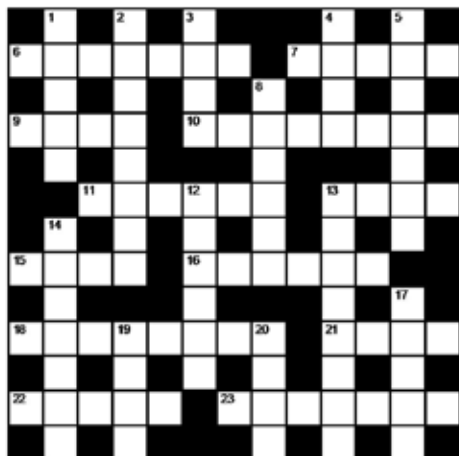
Fruit: apples, banana, nectarines, blueberries, strawberries, figs, redcurrants (most fruits taste great).
Flavourings: flaked or desiccated coconut, ground almonds.

Sweeteners: If you have a sweet tooth you can add maple syrup, honey or jam. My kids experimented with chocolate milk too – lovely with bananas.

Healthy fats: flax, nuts, nut butters

Toppings to add in the morning: granola, nuts, raisins, sour cherries, additional fruit, chocolate chunks

crossword



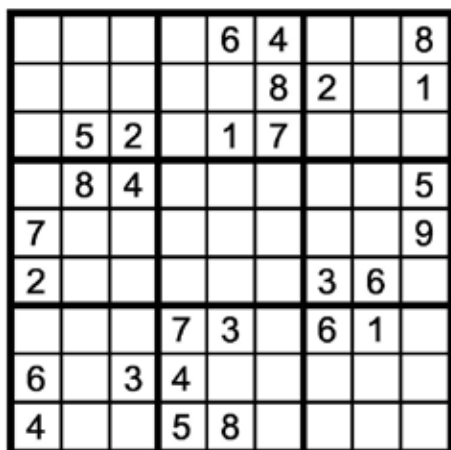
clues

Across

- 6 Trailblazer, trendsetter (7)
- 7 Sacked, given P45 (5)
- 9 Wooden shoe (4)
- 10 Measuring rod, inept person (8)
- 11 Belongs to a club (6)
- 13 Jab, prod (4)
- 15 Cat (informal) (4)
- 16 Glace, sour, Morello (6)
- 18 Valve in the loo cistern (8)
- 21 Did not tell the truth (4)
- 22 Oozy gool (5)
- 23 High military rank (7)

Down

- 1 Undulating landscape (5)
- 2 Chortle, titter (8)
- 3 Imprisoned, incarcerated (4)
- 4 Perfect, spanking-new (4)
- 5 Toasted fruit-bun (7)
- 8 Thinly dispersed (6)
- 12 Call forward with a gesture (6)
- 13 Adjacent lines indefinitely equidistant are said to be _____ (8)
- 14 Responsive to medical treatment (7)
- 17 Turkish meat dish cooked on a skewer (5)
- 19 Floppy (4)
- 20 Part of the underside of a boat used for stability (4)



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 37



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

Sudoku Solution

from page 35

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

Crossword Solution

from page 35

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