

the solihull index

a community magazine and business directory
for residents of solihull delivered FREE to 5700 homes



A Christmas gift at Broadoaks

Celebrating the completion of phase one at **Broadoaks** (Solihull).

Reserve one of our remaining luxury apartments and receive all you need to enjoy and celebrate your new home.

Promotion includes...

- Fully Furnished - Lounge, Kitchen, Bedroom
- Window Dressings
- Light Fittings
- Linen Pack
- Kitchen Utensil Pack
- WiFi for 12 months
- Amazon Prime for 12 months
- 50 inch TV
- £250 John Lewis Voucher

Reserve before 24/12/2020.



To book a viewing
call **0121 744 4144** Option 3
or email newhomes@smart-homes.co.uk



BROADOAKS
SOLIHULL



Bastock & Bruce Ltd

F U N E R A L D I R E C T O R S

A partnership between C. Bastock Ltd and Bruce Bragg

Bruce is now the only remaining member of the Bragg family still in the funeral business following the sale of the Bragg family business in Shirley to a national group.

This partnership brings a family business to Knowle with generations of experience ensuring the truly personal service you would expect from an independent Funeral Directors.

Brisker Court, 1685, High Street,
Knowle, Solihull. B93 0LN

01564 33 5577 (24 hour)

Serving all surrounding areas

If Knowle is difficult to get to,
home visits can be arranged
or we can arrange to use any of the
Bastock family funeral homes in Olton,
Shirley or Yardley.



www.bastockandbruce.co.uk

info@bastockandbruce.co.uk



EASTCOTE
PARK
CINNAMON LUXURY CARE



SHOW
SUITE
NOW OPEN

CALL TO BOOK
A VIEWING

Eastcote Park

Luxury retirement village and care home

Located in the heart of England, close to the village of Knowle and just 4 miles from Solihull, Eastcote Park offers luxury retirement living in a community setting.

Opening Spring 2021, this brand-new development comprises 34 high specification 2-bedroom luxury apartments together with exceptional private amenities and extensive resident services and offers so much more than traditional retirement developments. A state-of-the-art luxury 50-bedroom care home providing residential, dementia and respite care will also form part of the community at Eastcote Park, thereby offering the reassurance of care and support if required.

Take a tour of Eastcote Park

Call now to book your private tour of Eastcote Park including the superb communal facilities and luxury care home. **Tel: 01564 757405**



CINNAMON
LUXURY CARE

Eastcote Park, Knowle Road, Eastcote, Solihull B92 0JJ
www.cinnamoncc.com/eastcote

Christmas countdown

Welcome to the December edition...

By the time this arrives I'm sure you'll all be counting down the days to Christmas!

There would normally be loads of events and activities going on but this year's a little different. Why not use the time to find a new book – see page 31 for some ideas - or try some different recipes, like parmesan biscuits on page 23.

For those of you that eat too much over Christmas and who want to help others, why not try the Lions Festive Safari – it's been adapted this year and will feature 3 Festive Safari routes, involving Knowle, Dorridge and Bentley Heath parks: www.knowleanddorridgelions.com

However you spend your time, I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.



Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

www.solihullindex.com



contents

22 Puzzles

23 Recipe

28 Useful telephone numbers

29 Index

30 Local events

31 Book reviews

Locally designed by: hotlobster design ltd **Printed by:** Norwood Press

PLEASE RECYCLE THIS MAGAZINE

Long Term Foster Carers Wanted

Would you like a rewarding career?

Could you change a child's life?



At Voice Fostering there are key qualities that we look for in our Foster Carers. these are:

- A sense of humour
 - Patience
 - Determination
- Tolerance and understanding
 - Energy and motivation
 - Listening skills
- Non-judgemental nature
- Ability to work as part of a team
- Ability to work with other professionals
- Commitment to personal development
- Respect children's views and that they have a say in all decisions that affect their lives



Tel: 07946673592
07976588074

Email: info@voicefostering.co.uk

Web: www.voicefostering.co.uk

595 Tanworth Lane, Shirley, Solihull B90 4JE



Bathrooms Galore

Just add water...

Specialists in Bathroom Installation
And Bathroom Design

Just wanted to let you know
We're back working and ready to go...
We've had some time, we've had a rest
But now we're ready to do our best!



49 Stoney Lane, Yardley, Birmingham, B25 8RE

0121 783 9966

www.bathroomsgalore.co.uk

Stephen Smith & Son Plumbing & Heating Services



Accredited
Installer



Gas Safe reg no: 198187
Natural Gas, LPG & Oil

Which?
Trusted trader

**Tel: 0121 247 4957
or 01564 200119**

**10 years Manufacturer's Warranty
on all Worcester Greenstar
gas boilers installed***

www.stephensmithandson.co.uk

"Family business. Local and reliable."

Work carried out includes:

- Boilers / Radiators
- Natural Gas - LPG and Oil Installation and Repair
- Landlord Gas Safety Inspections/Certificates
- Boiler Servicing
- Hot Water Cylinders (vented and unvented)
- System Powerflushing
- Cold Water Tanks
- Shower Installations / Repairs
- Pipework
- Underfloor Heating

*Worcester Bosch terms apply

Festive Films you've (probably) never heard of

Every year we rely on a handful of our favourite Christmas movie staples. There's nothing like getting cosy with a perfect mug of hot chocolate and immersing ourselves in It's a Wonderful Life, or Elf to set the tone of the season.

Usually Christmas films provide a break from all the frantic festivities, a little welcome downtime. Well in 2020 we've had almost nothing BUT downtime and let's face it we probably watched most of our festive film playlist back when Halloween was cancelled. But I have three wonderful festive film suggestions you may never have seen in your life, or perhaps you've simply forgotten them. Enjoy.



29th Street - This terrific comedy drama from 1991 is actually set in 1976. It involves a lucky Italian American son, his unlucky hard-working father, the Mob, and a lottery ticket. It's an underrated gem. Thank me later.

Meet John Doe - This predates It's a Wonderful Life by a few years but is funnier and equal in its feel-good factor. Introduce your teens to Garry Cooper and watch them swoon.

Brazil - If you like your comedy black and dystopian this is the movie for you. Terry Gilliam's

Brazil is not just a Christmas movie, it's a Christmas movie for the little people; those of us trying to get by in a world gone temporarily more insane than usual without actually succumbing to insanity. Perfect for 2020 then!



**Acorn Floors
Ltd.**

Floorcovering Specialists

Providing quality floorcoverings for over 25 years

**Luxury Vinyl Tiles
Carpets
Wet Room Solutions
Floor Refurbishment
Carpet Whipping**



**Karndean
Designflooring**

amtico

POLYFLOR™
COVERING THE WORLD

**The complete
design and
installation service**

10% OFF
with this advert

Free Quotation & Sample Service

acorn-floors.co.uk enquiries@acorn-floors.co.uk

Contact Stephen Sherrington

0121 693 3301 07799 645 709

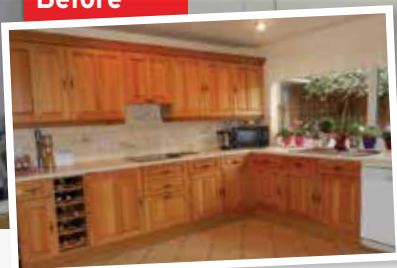
QUALITY KITCHEN MAKEOVERS

by simply replacing the doors and worktops

From the UK's #1
Kitchen makeover experts.
Visit our showroom now



Before



- FREE SIMPLE DOOR REPLACEMENTS TO COMPLETE FITTED KITCHENS
- FULLY INSTALLED BY LOCAL PROFESSIONALS IN JUST A FEW DAYS
- CHOOSE FROM A LARGE SELECTION OF DOORS, WORKTOPS AND APPLIANCES
- 84 SHOWROOMS NATIONWIDE



Est. 1999

DO YOU DREAM OF A NEW KITCHEN?



Proud members of
9.7/10 Checkatrade.com
Where reputation matters

See what our customers have to say

DREAM DOORS®

NEW LIFE FOR OLD KITCHENS

CALL US NOW FOR A FREE ESTIMATE:

0121 744 8974

VISIT OUR SHOWROOM:

134 Stratford Road, Shirley,
Solihull, B90 3BB

www.dreamdoors.co.uk




ALFRESCO STYLE

Garden Boutique - INDEPENDENTLY OWNED WITH
EVER-CHANGING SEASONAL PLANTS & INSPIRATIONAL DISPLAYS

Farm Shop - BURSTING WITH DELICIOUS LOCAL FOOD
INCLUDING FRESHLY BAKED BREAD, FRUIT & VEG, MEATS
AND CHEESES

Alfie's Café - WITH SCRUMPTIOUS HOME-MADE BREAKFAST,
LUNCHES, CAKES, AFTERNOON TEAS AND REFRESHMENTS



TIP OF THE MONTH:
DECEMBER - PLANT SKIMMIA
NOW FOR WINTER COLOUR!

Browse our Garden Boutique for inspirational Christmas ideas, pick up some local Festive Food, unique Christmas gifts then relax and enjoy home-made Afternoon Tea, mince pies and Mulled Wine in Alfie's Café

Our Events

Vintage Themed Christmas Market - Saturday 12th & Sunday 13th December

Christmas Markets - Saturday 19th & Sunday 20th December

Sale Starts 27th December

Special Shopping Evenings - perfect for birthdays, celebrations, group of friends - call 07990 513969 for details.

ALFRESCO STYLE
SPECIAL OFFER
ONE FREE HOT DRINK
WITH THIS VOUCHER ✂
VALID UNTIL 31.01.21

Hatton Shopping Village,
Hatton Country World, Hatton,
Warwick CV35 8XA
Tel: 01926 843555

www.thealfrescostyle.com

Open Every Day 10am - 5pm
(4pm during Jan & Feb)
Closed Christmas Day,
Boxing Day & New Year's Day
Events subject to change without notice



Alfresco Style
Creative Living



Solihull

TREE CARE SPECIALISTS

**Professional
Arboricultural
Services**

**All aspects of arboriculture
work undertaken.**

**Pruning, thinning, reshaping,
crown lift, reductions,
removals and stump removal.**

- All hedge work
- All waste removed
- All work guaranteed to the highest industry standards
- Fully insured
- Free advice and quotations
- NTPC Qualified Workforce



COVID-19 UPDATE:

We are still working – safely and in line with Government guidelines regarding social distancing

Freephone: 03335 775733

Mobile: 07786 527 729

Email: info@solihulltreecare.com www.solihulltreecare.com

Festive Fun in the Time of COVID!

How on Earth can we celebrate in the midst of all this?

It's been a weird old year. We'd all be forgiven for feeling more flat than festive. What we need are some simple ways to find fun in the time of COVID. The pandemic will mean Christmas won't look like it usually does, but with a bit of thought and creativity it's still possible to celebrate even if we have to spend Christmas away from friends and family:

Prioritize - Which traditions matter most to you? Which are easiest to maintain?

You can still set up the Christmas decorations, make special foods and watch your favourite films. Pantomimes and trips to the ballet are not possible though so use the family time to set up a games evening with prizes and lots of shouting. You can play charades with friends and family either outside or via video link. My kids love Nintendo Just Dance, and find it hilarious when my husband and I join in. Kids mostly want you...in silly festive mode. So put your phone away, just like you would at the theatre, and get stuck in.

Decorate a tree outside - This is the year to deck out your decking, and pretty your patio. Adorn an outdoor tree with LED lights and shatterproof ornaments. Use twist ties or florist's wire to secure the ornaments so they stay put even in the wind. Then invite a few friends round for a socially distanced switch on, complete with mulled wine.

Make memories - Create an advent calendar with festive activities for each day. The activities don't have to be elaborate; it could just be drinking hot chocolates with marshmallows together, wearing Santa hats, or watching Elf, or taking silly festive photos



Start a new tradition - How about a Secret Santa gift exchange outside round a firepit with toasted marshmallows? Or outdoor games on the decking with blankets and hot chocolate? There might be an outdoor cinema near you showing Christmas films. Go with friends, take blankets and flasks, and have a socially distanced outdoor film night!

Spread some joy - If 2020 has taught us anything, it's how much the people in our lives actually mean to us, so spread happiness where you can. Write down how much the people you love mean to you and send it out to them. Make Christmas cookies and leave some with your friends and neighbours. Drop off some treats at a local nursing home, hospital, or fire department to brighten the lives of the people there.

Different can be special - You probably don't remember exactly what happens at Christmas from year to year, but when something out of the ordinary occurs, it sticks in your memory...Christmas disasters often make the best dinner party stories in the years that follow. 2020 has the capacity to give us all enough stories for decades!

AP ALLOYS

MOBILE ALLOY WHEEL REPAIRS

*Mobile service to your
home or business*



ALLOY WHEEL REFURBISHMENT *(Full Face of Wheel)*

**Vandal Scratches - Plastic Bumper Damage
Dents + Scrapes to any panels - Stonechips
Machine Polishing - Paint Protection Treatments Applied
FREE Quotations - Main Dealer Approved**

Call Andy now for a fast, prompt and professional service

07972 852 758

Conspiracy Theories

Three of the best from 2020

Conspiracy theories have abounded since people sat around a campfire talking about where the sun went every night. 2020 has been a particularly fine year for conspiracy theories and if you're looking for something to talk about over Christmas dinner look no further than the craziest conspiracy theories of 2020.

The 5G theory

It's biologically impossible for viruses to spread using the electromagnetic spectrum. But that isn't really the point — conspiracy theorists love to link two things which at a cursory glance may appear be correlated. However, correlation is not causation. The rapid rollout of 5G networks was taking place at the same time as the pandemic hit. Cue conspiracists, mainly anti-vaccine activists spreading fears about electromagnetic radiation.

The World Health Organization (WHO) points out that viruses cannot travel on mobile networks, and that COVID-19 spread rapidly in many countries that do not have 5G networks. This didn't stop certain celebrities from spreading misinformation among their followers, culminating in mobile phone towers being vandalised.

The Bill Gates theory

Mr. Gates, who became a target of disinformation after he criticized the defunding of the World Health Organization. Conspiracy theorists dragged out a 2015 Ted talk given by Gates, where he discussed the Ebola outbreak and warned of the probability of a future pandemic, and claimed he must have had advance knowledge of the COVID pandemic or even that he caused it.

One variation of this theory, particularly beloved by anti-vaccination activists, is that Gates is plotting to initiate a programme to vaccinate the world's population and use this to implant digital



microchips that will somehow track and control people. As vaccinating much of the world's population may well be the only way to end this pandemic there is clearly a kernel of truth, but once again correlation is not causation.

The Chinese laboratory theory

This one at least has the benefit of being plausible. The original epicentre of the epidemic, the Chinese city of Wuhan, also hosts a virology institute where researchers have been studying bat coronaviruses for a long time. One of the researchers, Shi Zhengli, a prominent virologist, was sufficiently concerned about the prospect that she spent days combing through lab records to see if anything had gone wrong. She was relieved when genetic sequencing showed that the new SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus did not match any of the viruses sampled and studied in the Wuhan Institute of Virology by her team.

But the coincidence of China's lead institute studying bat coronaviruses being in the same city as the origin of the COVID outbreak proved irresistible to conspiracists and the theory has tipped into the mainstream, being reported in the Times, and many other outlets.

Conspiracy theories can take hold quickly. It's important that we don't just pass them on unthinkingly but investigate the facts for ourselves and speak out to combat misinformation, and not just about COVID.

Now That's What I Call a Terrible Christmas Song...

Forget Cliff Richard and Paul McCartney, I've rounded up the worst of the worst Christmas songs. Why not make a playlist and laugh along?

Nuffin' for Christmas. In the subset of annoying Christmas songs sung by particularly irritating children this 1955 one by a then-6-year-old Barry Gordon is a winner. He sings a grating ditty about all the bad things he did and the snitches who ratted him out. It's meant to be adorable but by the end you're fully in favour of the kid getting nothing for next decade.

The Chipmunk Song (Christmas Don't Be Late) by Alvin and the Chipmunks. Just. No. Same **Old Lang Syne** by Dan Fogelberg. Where do I begin? First, he runs into his old

high school crush at the supermarket on Christmas Eve. Basically, he stalks her through produce. She's married, he's a musician. They could just wish each other Merry Christmas and go their separate ways but no, they go for a drink but find the bars closed because people are home with their families (surprise!). So, they buy a six-pack, share it in the car and then DRIVE home. All the wrong things in one song.

Finally, you HAVE to look up the video of the amazing Siouxsie and the Banshees (heroes of my youth) looking bemused and embarrassed to find themselves singing the children's carol **Il Est né le Divin Enfant**. So brilliantly bad I had to watch it twice.



Home Instead
SENIOR CARE®
to us, it's personal.

The best home to be in is your own

Home Instead Senior Care Solihull

Phone: 01564 330 395 | 01212 704 615

Website: www.homeinstead.co.uk/solihull

Each Home Instead Senior Care® franchise office is independently owned and operated. Copyright © Home Instead 2017.



19th Dec 2020 - 4th Jan 2021

LIONS FESTIVE



Can you
spot our
45 Lions?

SAFARI

Full details on how to join our Safari, maps and donation link
visit our website: www.knowleanddorridgeions.com



**KNOWLE & DORRIDGE
LIONS CLUB**
Registered charity No. 509993



Donations for local primary schools - visit our website or use QR code above

Jet2holidays

**THE SAME PRICE
OR LESS + VIP
EXPERIENCE**

**DON'T GO DIRECT
CONTACT ME
TODAY**

SABINA 07565 534 524



C. STEVENS ROOFING

EST FAMILY BUSINESS

NEW TILED ROOFS • GUTTERS
FLAT ROOFS • BRICK WORK
LEADWORK • SMALL REPAIRS
UPVC FASCIAS • CHIMNEYS



KNOWLE

SOLIHULL

01564 790008 0121 733 1276



WWW.CSTEVENSROOFING.CO.UK

The Top 5 Things To Do In Dubai

A city that needs to be seen to be believed, Dubai is a playground for those from young, to young at heart. It's full of record-breaking architecture, shopping malls with a whole world inside them, and adrenaline-fuelled days out. But what are the must-do activities?

Sky Diving

If you're an adventure-seeker, then this is a must for you. Supervised by trained professionals, you'll tandem skydive through the clouds from 13,000 feet and take in the incredible sights. You'll get to see the emirate from an entirely different perspective, plus you can even opt to take home a video of it all!



in time to a range of melodies, propelling up to 22,000 gallons of water as high as 140m! The Dubai Fountain

options such as Nobu or try one of the restaurants built over the water, the experiences are truly never-ending.

Ski

Skiing in Dubai, who would have thought it?! Alas, you can in fact ski in the desert! It's actually located inside the Mall of the Emirates. You can play with penguins, build a snowman, roll down the hills, ride the Twin Track Bobsled or explore the snow cavern. To carve up the slope, simply catch a chairlift or ride a frozen zip-line to the top of the hill where you can snowplough to your heart's content.

Palm Jumeirah

This man-made phenomenon is home to high-end hotels such as Waldorf Astoria, One&Only, and Atlantis, The Palm to name a few! Jump on the monorail and head to one of the out-of-this-world dining

Burj Khalifa

It might be the tallest building in the world, but it's also so much more. Head to floors 124 and 125 to enjoy unique 260-degree views, or for some sky-high dining book at Atmosphere Restaurant on the 122nd floor, or The Lounge for high tea among the clouds. You'll also find a 5* hotel designed by Giorgio Armani, a luxury spa and fitness club, and an impressive art gallery.



The Dubai Fountain

If you've ever been to The Bellagio fountain in Las Vegas, then you'll understand how a fountain can be incredibly emotional! Located in Downtown, the Dubai Fountain is the tallest performing fountain in the world (there's a trend here) and immerses you in a captivating water, music and light experience. The illuminated water dances

Sabina Clay

Not Just Travel
sabina.clay@notjusttravel.com
07565 534 524



PRESTIGE

MULTI TRADES LTD



Roofing and Exterior Property Maintenance

Main & flat roof repairs | New main roof & fully bonded touch on flat roof systems | Latest Grp fibreglass roofing systems (fully approved installer) | Leadwork repairs | Replacement cut and dressed on site to suite your requirements | UPVC fascia, guttering, windows, doors and more | Exterior spray applied wall & roof coatings

We have been working within your area for over
25 years solving your maintenance puzzles

www.prestigemultitrade.uk

a1prestigeprop@aol.com

0121 745 3359 | 07886 922 280

PRESTIGE MULTI TRADES LTD

complete professional property renovation
and maintenance services



**“From a new roof to a dripping tap,
to installing a cat flap”**

CALL FOR A QUOTE

**HANDYMAN SERVICE
NOW AVAILABLE**

Flat Roof Repairs and Recovering Specialist | UPVC
Windows | Doors, Soffits, Guttering | General Property
Repairs and Property Maintenance | Decorating | Carpentry
| Plumbing | Plastering | Brickwork | Garden maintenance
and much more...

We have been working within your area for over
25 years solving your maintenance puzzles

www.prestigemultitrade.uk
a1prestigeprop@aol.com
0121 745 3359 | 07886 922 280

CROSSROADS SERVICE STATION LTD

A friendly, family-run business since 1969

- MOT Testing – Cars & Motorbikes
- Servicing & Repairs
- Air Conditioning Service & Repair
- Diagnostic Service & Repair
- Laser Wheel Alignment
- Tyres – Supplied & Fitted
- Qualified & Experienced Staff
- Courtesy Car or Collection/Delivery available

**OPEN 6 DAYS
A WEEK**

MON – FRI 8.00am – 6.00pm
SAT 8.00am – 1.00pm

COVID SECURE

VOSA   RMI

599-601 Tanworth Lane, Shirley, Solihull B90 4JE

Tel: 01564 703225

www.crossroadservicestation.co.uk

VAT No.: 113213041

CLEARLY
BETTER

WINDOWS

**Are YOUR windows
ready for a makeover?**

New glass in your existing windows

- Replace failed double glazing: just the pane, not the frame •
- Fix faulty hinges, handles and locks •

A local family run business with 10+ years of experience, we can help you

Call 0800 048 5223

For a FREE quote

Visit ClearlyBetterWindows.co.uk to find out more



FANTASTIC FLOORING

QUICK STEP®
FLOOR DESIGNERS

LIVYN

ONLY
£26.65
per m²

£31.98 inc. VAT

STAIN
GUARD

SCRATCH
GUARD

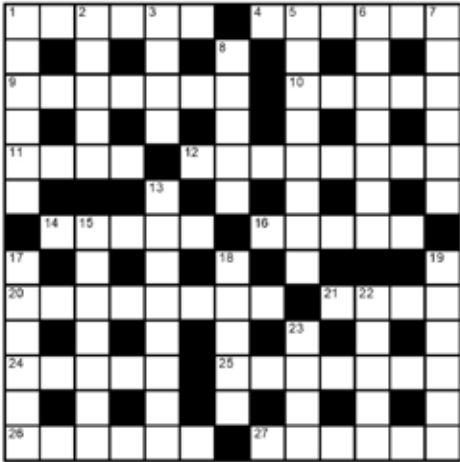
Balance Saw Cut
Vinyl Flooring
Canyon Oak Grey
2.105m²/pack

Ambient Vinyl
Flooring
Black Slate
2.08m²/pack

 **EH Smith**
Builders Merchants

 Haslucks Green Rd, Shirley
Tel 0121 713 7100

crossword



clues

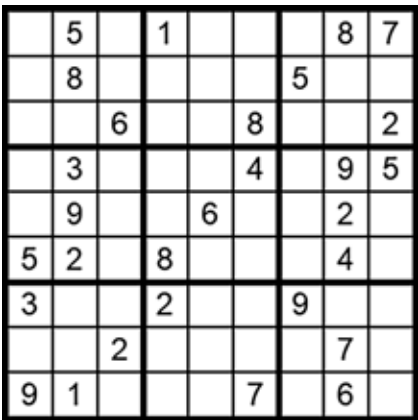
Across

- 1 Ploy (6)
- 4 Unknowable, occult (6)
- 9 Disapproves (7)
- 10 Angry (5)
- 11 Land measure (4)
- 12 Perplexing (8)
- 14 Dwarf planet (5)
- 16 Mournful poem (5)
- 20 Scorn (8)
- 21 Fencing sword (4)
- 24 Female relative (5)
- 25 Pills (7)
- 26 Unmarried (6)
- 27 Precious (6)

Down

- 1 Worldwide (6)
- 2 Type of musical scale (5)
- 3 2.54cm. (4)
- 5 Precipitation (8)
- 6 Fantastic (7)
- 7 Appear, loom (6)
- 8 Ordinary (5)
- 13 Celestial (8)
- 15 Beacon (7)
- 17 Parts of a play (6)
- 18 Catches sight of (5)
- 19 Creatures (6)
- 22 Fragment (5)
- 23 Woodwind instrument (4)

answer on page 29



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 29

Preparation time: 20 minutes
plus resting time.

Cooking time: 10-20 mins

Makes about 24+

**Moreish festive
goodies**
great for gifts

Parmesan Biscuits

Ingredients

100g cold unsalted butter, cut into chunks
100g plain flour, plus extra for flouring
pinch salt
pinch cayenne pepper
1 heaped tsp mustard powder
50g finely grated mature cheddar
50g finely grated parmesan, or similar
vegetarian hard cheese, plus a little extra
1 egg, beaten

Method

Preheat the oven to 180C/350F/Gas 4.
Place the butter and flour into a bowl of
a food processor with the salt, cayenne,

mustard powder, and cheeses. Rub the
fat into the flour mixture then gradually
bring the mixture together to form a
dough. Don't add egg or water. Wrap
the dough in cling film and leave to chill
in the fridge for at least 30 minutes.

Lightly flour a work surface and gently roll
out the pastry to about 1cm thick. Cut
out the biscuits using festive cutters. Lay
them out on a greased baking tray about
2cm apart. You might need two trays.

Brush the surface of each biscuit with the
beaten egg and sprinkle over a little finely
grated parmesan. Bake for 10 minutes, or until
they are golden-brown. They smell heavenly!

Remove from the oven and carefully lift
the biscuits off the tray using a palette
knife, then place on a rack to cool. They
make lovely gifts and will keep well in
a sealed container for a few days.

PRO LINE

PROFESSIONAL LINE UK LTD

REPLACEMENT PVCu FASCIAS & GUTTERS

IT'S THE ONLY PROPER WAY

Don't be fooled by cheap prices! Capping over existing Fascias will ruin your home! It causes sweating, will rot away your old boards and eventually put dry rot through your roofing timbers.

Don't be fooled by those who say they cut rotten wood first, and then cap over.
OLD WOOD WILL ROT, NO MATTER WHAT!

CALL NOW FOR OUR DECEMBER & JANUARY DEALS

We promise to beat any genuine quote!

TEL: 0121 314 4390 MOBILE: 07776 287035

I will call, survey and explain exactly what the installation entails, with no obligation on your part. We would however be pleased to quote you for any additional areas. If you have had new Gutters & Down Pipes in the last ten years, it is possible to refit them afterwards.

Central Boulevard, Blythe Valley Business Park, West Midlands, B90 8AG

We also install Windows, Conservatories, Porches, Cavity Wall Insulation, Felt & Flat Roofs



FULLY FITTED ROLLER GARAGE DOORS

FROM **£895*** WAS **£1,354**
INC VAT

* Offer Valid For Openings Up To 2.4m Wide & 2m High
2 Remote Controls, 1 Year White Noise, Internal Manual Override

WHATS INCLUDED:

ACOUSTIC & THERMAL
INSULATION

TWO REMOTE CONTROLS

EXPERT MEASURING &
FITTING

24 COLOURS AVAILABLE



GAROLLA
ROLLER
SHUTTER
DOORS
www.garolla.co.uk



Garolla can save a lot of space inside your garage. Rolls up vertically into a box. Takes only 8 inches of headroom! Opens vertically so you can park up close to the door. Remotely open/close the garage even from inside your car.

Made To Measure...

ROLLER GARAGE DOORS

CALL US TODAY

Phone:

0121 369 0774

Mobile:

07537 149 128



Dimension Groundworks & Driveways

Specialists in Driveways and Landscaping

- Block paving • Tarmacing (red or black) • Patios
- Brickwork • Slabbing • Gravel • Landscaping
- Fencing • Property & roof repairs
- Driveway maintenance
(pressure cleaning & sealing – weed free)



07961 358367 / 0121 652 0145 / 01926 674782

dimensiongroundworks@icloud.com

www.dimensionpathways.co.uk

328 Alcester Road Wythall Birmingham West Midlands B47 6JR



Does your
website look old
and dated?



Hotlobster Design offers you up-to-date
websites to replace your tired ones.

Bespoke content managed websites are cheaper than you think.
Call now for a chat about your website, social media & marketing needs.

hotlobster 
design • marketing • web • print

studio@hotlobster.uk.com
T: 0121 369 1977
www.hotlobster.uk.com

Hatton

SHOPPING VILLAGE

Fully Open Again!

A wonderful selection of independent shops who are delighted to be able to open their doors once again. **The Unusual, The Unique and Boutique** is what you find here - very much Not on The High Street.

Two jewellers who have been plying their craft at Hatton since the early '80s; antiques and collectibles; an inspirational garden centre & farm shop; a gin distillery next to a new bike shop; ladies fashion; ceramics studio & shop; wildlife gallery. The list goes on...

With oodles of space and fresh air, ideal for social distancing this is **Christmas Shopping as it Should be.**

Outdoor Christmas Markets

Every weekend right up until Christmas the festive atmosphere really takes off with outdoor **Christmas Markets**. Bursting with a multitude of fantastic festive gifts and unique presents. **All outside in the fresh air.**

You'll be sure to find the perfect Christmas gift at **Hatton Shopping Village.**

*Please Support your
Local Independent Shops*

OPEN EVERY DAY 10AM - 5PM

TEL: 01926 843411

www.hattonworld.com

FREE
ADMISSION



HATTON COUNTRY WORLD,
5 MINUTES FROM J15 M40,
3 MILES OUTSIDE WARWICK
OFF A4177 WARWICK - SOLIHULL RD.

THE UNUSUAL, THE UNIQUE & BOUTIQUE

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 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

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

SOLIHULL / SILHILL

Mike Gough

Tel: 07480 253181

Michael.gough@solihull.gov.uk

Peter Hogarth MBE

Tel: 0121 705 5455

phogarth@solihull.gov.uk

Wazma Qais

Tel: 0121 709 3404

wazma.qais@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

6 Bathrooms Galore 0121 783 9966

Builders' Merchants

21 EH Smith 0121 713 7100

Car Services

13 AP Alloys 07972 852758

20 Crossroads Service Station 01564 703225

Care services

3 Eastcote Park 01564 757405

15 Home Instead 01564 330395

Carpets & Flooring

8 Acorn Floors 0121 693 3301

35 Don Mander 01564 700 200

Doors and windows

20 Clearly Better Windows 0800 048 5223

24 Garolla garage doors 0121 369 0774

Estate agents

1 smarthomes 0121 744 4144

Events & Shopping

10 Alfresco Style 01926 843555

27 Hatton Country World 01926 843411

Fascias & Gutters

24 Proline 0800 956 1315

Fostering

5 Voice Fostering 07946 673592

Funeral Directors

2 Bastock & Bruce 01564 335577

Gardens and Drives

11 Solihull Tree Care 0121 604 6809

25 Dimension Landscape & Driveways 0121 733 1463

34 Central Drives & Landscapes 0121 702 1456

Graphic and Website Design

26 Hot Lobster Design Ltd 0121 369 1977

Handyman Services

19 Prestige Multi-Trades 07886 922280

Heating

7 Stephen Smith Plumbing & Heating 01564 200119

Kitchens

9 Dream Doors 121 744 8974

Plumbing

7 Stephen Smith Plumbing & Heating 01564 200119

Roofing

16 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276

18 Prestige Multi-Trades 07886 922280

36 N Bird & Son 0800 195 6946

Travel Agent

16 Not Just Travel 07565 534524

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

Sudoku Solution

from page 22

G	A	M	B	I	T	A	R	C	A	N	E
L	A	N	U	A	M	M					
O	B	J	E	C	T	S	I	R	A	T	E
B	O	H	U	N	Z	R					
A	C	R	E	B	A	F	F	L	I	N	G
L			E	L	A	N	E				
P	L	U	T	O	E	L	E	G	Y		
S	A	H	S	L						B	
C	O	N	T	E	M	P	T	E	P	E	E
E	T	R	O	O	I	A					
N	I	E	C	E	T	A	B	L	E	T	S
E	R	A	S	O	C	T					
S	I	N	G	L	E	J	E	W	E	L	S

crossword Solution

from page 22

local events

Please note: in these uncertain times it's worth checking these events are still running before you turn up.

.....

Sunday lunch with Santa

Sundays from

29 November - 20 December

Hogarth's Hotel, Dorridge

Meet and greet with Santa and enjoy a 3-course meal. Sittings at 12pm, 1:30pm and 3pm. Children will eat smaller portions of the main menu or an alternative menu is available on request. £30 adults, £22 children under 10. Call 01564 779988 to book.

.....

Soihull's Jingle Bell Jog

13 December

Solihull Town Centre

Spread plenty of festive cheer this December by donning a Santa suit and completing the Jingle Bell Jog - a 2.5km fun run through Solihull town centre. Run, walk, dance, jog or jingle your way around the course and don't worry about the training, this festive run is about dressing up and coming together with friends and family. For more information call 0121 285 1370.

.....

Soihull's Jingle Bell Jog

13 December

Solihull Town Centre

Spread plenty of festive cheer this December by donning a

.....



Santa suit and completing the Jingle Bell Jog - a 2.5km fun run through Solihull town centre. Run, walk, dance, jog or jingle your way around the course and don't worry about the training, this festive run is about dressing up and coming together with friends and family. For more information call 0121 285 1370.

.....

Christmas Vintage, Craft and Gift Fayre

13 December, 1-4pm

Arden Hotel, Coventry Road, Bickenhill, Solihull

Live music & entertainment all afternoon! Old time dancing with our vintage singer - no partner required! RezaFarrell will be taking you back in time with Christmas classics through the decades, vintage fashion, retro items, craft & gift stalls, antiques, handmade items, unique Christmas gifts, books & toys, Christmas decorations, beauty treatments & holistic therapies, psychic readings, and so much more! www.ardenhotel.co.uk

Solihull Festive Feast

18 -22 December

Mel Square, Solihull

Shoppers will be treated to flavours from around the world with a wide range of hot foods to sample and cold items to take home for that Christmas pantry to share with their nearest and dearest. When you think of Christmas, think of Solihull this festive season as the town centre embraces the festive feel in the run-up to the big day.



a good read

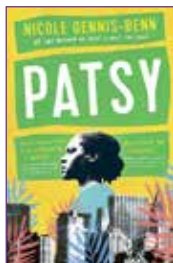
reviews By Willow Coby

Patsy

by Nicole Dennis-Benn

Patsy grew up in an impoverished town in Jamaica and struggles to make ends meet, raising her 5-year-old daughter, Tru. But she has a dream. A dream that lies across the ocean in a city that never sleeps, watched over by Lady Liberty. She isn't the only one. Many have left Jamaica for America, sending home details of their new lives. But you can't just leave Jamaica and head to the US. When Patsy is finally granted a visa, it is only a visitor one. And just for her, not Tru. And so, leaving her daughter behind with her previously absent father, she begins her life as an undocumented migrant. It soon becomes clear that life in New York is not what she thought it would be.

Dennis-Benn has created an engrossing novel showing the reality of the plight of migrants. Spanning a decade, it switches between Patsy and her new life and Tru's childhood as she grows up without her mother. It says something about her skills as a writer that she has created a central character that is so flawed and yet likeable at the same time. The dialogue switches effortlessly between English and Jamaican Patois, leaving you, the reader, as an inhabitant of the two worlds that Patsy herself occupies. Will she ever be reunited with her daughter and how does a decision taken so long ago affect the two of them as life moves on around them in two vastly different countries?



The Boy at the Back of the Class

by Onjali Q. Rauf

In a similar vein we have a story for children about what it is like to be a stranger in a strange land. The difference here is that Ahmet is not an economic migrant, but a refugee, fleeing civil war in Syria. He arrives one day at the start of term and sits in a chair at the back of the

class and carries a tattered old red backpack. He is quiet and spends break and lunchtime in Seclusion. The 9 and $\frac{3}{4}$ year old narrator and their friends don't know why he stays apart and are determined to find out why. When they finally learn of Ahmet's story, they are determined to help him and seek the help of the one person in the country that they know can help: The Queen. A moving story this directly challenges attitudes towards refugees and the children encounter adults who are sympathetic towards his plight, but also those who are not. Simple events show the kindness of strangers (the gift of a pomegranate) and gives hope that this next generation can be the one to bring in a change of attitude and a realisation that we are all one humanity. All too often we are quick to judge – and Rauf uses a very clever technique to bring this to the fore, leaving the reader re-evaluating everything they have read with just a few pages to go – rather than accepting. Ahmet's story is sadly not just a story created in an author's imagination but is one that too many children are experiencing – tattered backpack and all.



Hard-working ivy

*The Holly and the Ivy,
When they are both full grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The Holly bears the crown.*

Holly is much coveted festive greenery but what about ivy, or *Hedera* to give it the botanical name? It makes up the trio of festive plants, the other being mistletoe, and frankly it's usually seen as a bit of a poor relation, misunderstood and mostly unloved.

Yet ivy is a great workhorse in the garden. It's evergreen, it attracts wildlife and is excellent on those north-facing walls and fences where nothing else seems to grow. It's not just a dark green cloak either; there are many cultivars with different leaf shapes and variegated foliage. The variegated varieties are great in those areas that catch just a little sunlight during part of the day as they suddenly seem to illuminate a usually dull spot.

Ivy is great for disguising an ugly wall, a bare fence, or an old tree stump. It's a reliable and self-clinging climber if you choose the right variety and remember to prune it correctly. The young climbing stems are slender and flexible

with small aerial roots that fix the shoot to a surface. Adult stems are thicker, self-supporting and do not have roots. Unlike mistletoe ivy isn't parasitic so won't harm trees but be careful about letting it grow on the walls of your house as it will damage weak mortar and pebbledash. If growing on a property it needs to be clipped back in spring and summer, so it doesn't do any damage to structure underneath. Don't let it get into gutters because it will clog them then infiltrate under tiles or slates.

Ivy is excellent ground cover. It will scramble over areas of poor soil and brighten the ground between shrubs during the dark winter months. Persian ivy, *Hedera colchica* 'Dentata Variegata', is lovely because of its large, yellow-edged leaves. *Hedera canariensis* 'Gloire de Marengo' is also good. Its red stems and large leaves with splashes of yellow looks rather splendid. If you need an area covered quickly try *Hedera Hibernica*, which is a vigorous native ivy.

Hedera helix is the other native ivy and this one has numerous cultivars including Goldheart, which has yellow-centred leaves, Green Ripple, with frilly edged leaves and 'Buttercup' which is bright yellow.

If you love to support the wildlife in your garden, then ivy is a terrific plant. During autumn and early winter adult ivies produce small greenish-yellow flowers. These are especially rich in nectar so attract bees, butterflies, hoverflies, and other insects, providing them with a place to overwinter. Birds like thrushes, blackbirds and robins enjoy the purple black berries which ripen from late winter to mid-spring, providing a much-needed winter food source.

I hope I've made a good case for growing ivy in your garden. Holly might bear the crown, but I reckon ivy deserves a tiara at the very least!

Happy gardening and Merry Christmas,



Friendship Fade

A quarter of people in Great Britain have no-one they can call a 'best friend' and nearly one-in-eight admit to having no friends at all. As the pandemic continues and interactions with friends become more virtual, even those who have never had to worry about friendships are noticing friendship fade.

We like to think that our friendships are based on shared interests and personality traits, but mostly they are based on proximity, consistency, and communication.

We're all feeling jaded and lacking in energy right now. It's no surprise we're struggling to summon the motivation to interact with others. Friendships falter during sustained periods of radio silence and at the moment we lack the new and shared experiences, the grievances and personal victories that previously we would have dissected at length over a bottle of wine.

In addition, we all have vastly different pandemic experiences. Some of us are working from quiet well-ordered homes; others are jobless, struggling financially, or trying to arrange near impossible childcare for who kids may be quarantining due to school outbreaks. Some may even have lost family members. These differences put a strain on the closest friendships, and it can feel as though we're drifting apart. However, with a bit of effort we can reconnect.

Many friendships are based around a hobby. Craft sessions and book clubs moved

Maintaining friendships when you can't meet up is tough.

easily online, but sport and music groups are more difficult to transfer...choirs don't really work online, and you certainly can't play badminton remotely. It's good to try to get together socially though. Try an online quiz or watch a film together. You already have one interest in common so there will probably be other connections, and repeated interactions prime us to be friends with one another.

It can feel risky to reach out, but scientists have proven that people who initiate interactions are less likely to be lonely over time, and they're more likely to be satisfied in

their relationships. Many people assume that if their friend doesn't initiate then they're not interested, but everybody's afraid of rejection. We tend to underestimate how much someone we have interacted with likes us, especially if we're self-critical. It's called 'The liking gap'. Also, we tend to think that we have

to be cool, fascinating, or smart, but if you treat others well and make them feel valued, they are more likely to want to be friends.

If someone doesn't respond, don't be despondent; they might suffer with social anxiety, or be overwhelmed with work, or struggling with other problems in their lives. Think of reaching out like exercising a muscle; the more you do it the more likely you'll make and maintain friendships.

Put video chats in your diary, in the same way you would schedule a dinner date. Face time is the closest thing we have to real life face-to-face connections right now. It's not perfect but it will help keep friendships strong.



Why not invest in a new driveway or patio to enhance the appearance and add value to your property?

Approved Drives and Landscapes offer a range of services to help improve all areas of your home, including;

Clay & Block Paving - Tarmacing (red or black) -
Patios - Brickwork - Slabbing - Gravel -
Landscaping - Fencing - Property Repairs
Roofing Repairs - Driveway Maintenance
(Pressure cleaning & sealing - weed free)



Proud member of



Find us in/on

Google

look local

Find us on facebook

Yell

www.centraldrivewayslimited.com

Get in touch today for a FREE quotation

T: 0121 702 1456 M: 07748 577687

Michael.central@icloud.com



**IN SUPPORT OF
HELP for
HEROES**

D.A. MANDER & SON Ltd

PROFESSIONAL FITTER AND
SUPPLIER OF QUALITY CARPETS

*Don Mander does not have retail premises. If you need him
please call him direct – the only way to buy carpets*

We'd like to wish
all our customers a merry
Christmas and a happy
and healthy New Year.



Need a carpet?

Support the NHS
Stay at home and stay safe

We come to you

ACCURATE
See colours in their
true light

CONVENIENT
View in the comfort of
your own home

EASIER
Than walking round
lots of shops

0121 647 3598

We can uplift and remove existing carpets and move furniture

Mobile: 07976 778694
FREE ESTIMATES

The Cottage, Forshaw Heath Lane, Earlswood, Solihull

See our Review's at

Google

Yell

Freeindex

ROOFING

by

N. BIRD & SON

Trading from **registered**
offices in Solihull for 30 years

Checkatrade



FREE QUOTES

0121 743 6324

- Small repairs
- Flat roofs
- New roofs
- Ridge tiles
- Chimney work
- Lead work
- UPVC fascia, soffit & gutters

249 Lyndon Road, Solihull B92 7QP



ANNIVERSARY

**Celebrating 30 years
in Business**

NO PAYMENT UNTIL YOU ARE 100% SATISFIED