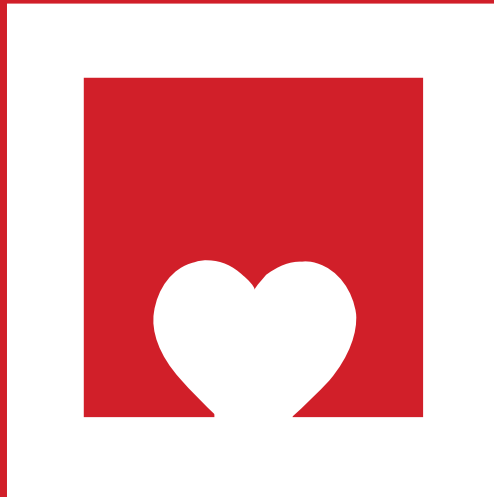


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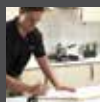
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Welcome to the February edition...

With Chinese New Year on the 5th February and Valentine's Day on the 14th, that gives you at least 2 excuses to go out and celebrate!

If you're in the mood for eating out why not try the Barn at Berryfields in Meriden, with views over the lovely Warwickshire countryside. Or if you just want to put your feet up, see what's coming up at the cinema and Core Theatre in Solihull over the next few weeks.

Don't forget to check out the local events page – you can choose from a fun run, beer festival, bookfest and much more.

Enjoy your leisure time, however you spend it!

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community events

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This February half term, Touchwood is hosting a series of boredom-busting activities which start on 16th February with an exclusive free coding class. Places are limited, to apply visit Touchwood's Facebook page. Touchwood will also be hosting a special LEGO brick pit, completely free. With Duplo for under 3's and LEGO bricks for children 3+, the pits will be open Monday 18th to Friday 22nd February and a grand prize will be awarded to the best Duplo and LEGO brick builders. For more details call 0121 709 6900



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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.
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- **Homework Club** - Tuesdays 3.45pm to 5.15pm, term time only
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Anne Bird, Bristol



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Who loves you?

As Valentine's day draws closer and we are enveloped in a sea of shiny red balloons and fake roses let's have a think about the person who loves us the most.

What would they say about you if I asked them? What qualities would they say they love you for? Maybe you're funny, ambitious, caring and sociable, maybe you are thoughtful and a good listener. Whatever we come up with, we find it is easier to think about our good points through the eye of someone who loves us rather than scrape the bottom of the barrel on our own.

I would bet my life that if I asked you what you like about yourself the answer would be a long time coming! Thinking about the positives other people identify in us is a lovely way to open ourselves up to who we really are but what if we could go a step better even than that.

No one can love you more than you can love yourself and therein lies a problem, especially if we constantly are beating ourselves up about how little we do or how rubbish we are. We should look out for ourselves and care for ourselves the way we would for the ones we love the most. We cannot rely on others to do it for us as we can often be left disappointed!

Waiting for someone to say they love us or they appreciate us can be frustrating unless we learn to value ourselves. Although I still love praise and recognition, it's far nicer to be responsible for how I feel about myself.

If I only value myself when praise comes from someone I'm in trouble!! Quite often we blame people for not behaving how we want...not visiting or not phoning.

Connection is two way and if you need that call or visit to make you feel whole then make it yourself! This may sound harsh but we can't control other people only our own actions and behaviours. Loving ourselves is the easiest way to build confidence and self-esteem and it doesn't require fake roses!



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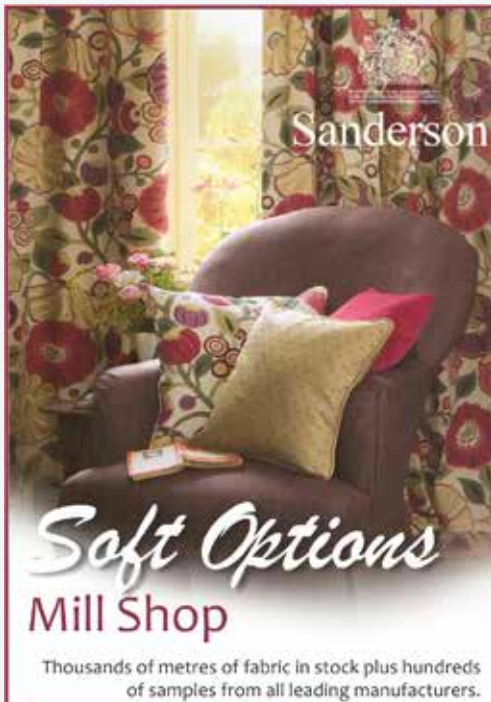
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**Answers on
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professional document, it won't improve your employability. **Don't mention the reasons for leaving your current job** or give detailed justifications for career breaks. Keep to the point and focus on the job you're applying for.

Focus on what the employer wants, not what you want. Avoid detailing your hopes and don't explain what you'd get out of the job. A cover letter is about showing the recruiter that you can fulfil their objectives. So, talk about your achievements,

skills, and experience only if they relate directly to the role and emphasise what they would get from employing you.

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Do you need a Fitbit?

Do You Need an Activity Tracker?

Activity trackers have become very popular in recent years. Fitbits are the device that everyone has heard of but there are many others. If you're thinking of buying one, ask yourself these questions:

Do you exercise regularly?

Lots of people buy a Fitbit or its equivalent because they think it will help them to exercise consistently. But these devices are not magic bullets. If you make any and every excuse NOT to exercise then a Fitbit won't change that, you will simply make excuses to avoid exercise while wearing a gadget!

Would you wear it, and use it?

For a fitness tracker to give you actionable data you need to wear it almost all of the time, even while asleep. Some people can't wear watches or jewellery while they are at work, others hate the feeling of anything on their wrist, and others have sensitive skin which is irritated by straps. If you don't wear it then it can't do its job, so it's not worth buying one.

Will you use the app?

You'll need to download the app to your phone and use it if you want to make use of the data your activity tracker collects. Interacting with your device and the app is key to success, so if you can't commit, don't buy.

Are you a data nerd?

Some of us love to monitor our sleep, our heart rates, the number of steps we do each day. We find ourselves endlessly fascinating. The basics of losing weight and becoming healthier are simple, but the specifics for our own body can vary wildly. If you don't care about specifics and are

happy with just eating a bit less and exercising

a bit more, an activity tracker might be a waste of money for you. If you have a medical condition or are in training for an event, or just enjoy looking at data, then having organized and detailed information at your fingertips is a great resource.

Would my phone do the job instead?

There are hundreds of fitness, pedometer and cycling apps on both Android and iOS. If you're unsure about whether an activity tracker is the right purchase for you try using one or two of these apps for a month. You might find they give you all the data you need. Also, if you find you can't be bothered to use the apps, then you are very unlikely to benefit from buying an activity tracker.

Are you competitive?

Some activity trackers (particularly Fitbits) are social. You can add friends, compare step counts and earn milestone badges. You can also create groups and engage in competitions and challenges.

While these are good features, they aren't for everyone. You might not need such a high-spec activity tracker if you don't want to engage in the social side of things. Activity trackers are useful devices and many people enjoy them and benefit from using them, but they won't turn a reluctant exerciser into a highly motivated one, and if you aren't actually interested in all the data, they might not justify their price tag.



By Ian Collins

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Hair Today

By Tracey Anderson

No, it's not 'Just a haircut!'

Have you ever marked a life event by changing your hairstyle? Did you regret it, or did you feel free? Many people, most of them women, use haircuts as a marker for change.

In films the main character often undergoes a makeover as a metaphor for the dramatic changes they undergo in the movie: Sandy in *Grease*, and Julia Roberts' character in *Pretty Woman* are just two of them. Before the makeover things were bad; after the makeover things are good. Simple. Or is it? In real life hairdressers bear witness to this scenario frequently. We may not tell them directly, but often they will sense **we're on a mission to create a new improved version of ourselves**; or a quick way to shed the past and move on.

But dramatic hairstyle changes while in the midst of a life crisis can prove ill-advised. **Sometimes we're not really after a new hairstyle, more a whole new life.** And as satisfying as it is to leave a salon with a completely new look, we need to remember that our hair might look different, but our problems will remain the same. We will still feel just as bad about our husband running off with our best friend, we'll just be doing it with shorter hair! During a divorce, a bereavement or a health crisis we will experience a maelstrom of emotions: and one-minute chopping all our hair off will feel like the best decision in the world, but the next minute, when we look in the mirror and see a total stranger staring back at us it might feel terrifying.

Yet hair is an important aspect of how we express who we are and how we would

like to be seen. Changing our hair is one of the easiest ways to send a signal to the world that we have changed. It can be a great tool to help us shed an outgrown 'self'. My friend shed her shoulder-length blonde hair for a pixie crop shortly after she gave birth to twins. She felt she needed freedom from her hair care routine, so she could spend more time with her babies.

For her it was freeing to be able to wake, shower and be ready to go in minutes. I had my tousled waist-length hair cut to a chic bob when I started my first proper job in journalism. I felt like I needed to **create a bit of distance between 'student me' and 'professional me'**. Like the caterpillar shedding the chrysalis I was ready to be someone new and the hair salon was my chrysalis of choice.

So, the next time you collapse into the hairdresser's comfy chair intent on an image overhaul, just pause for a second and **ask yourself why, and whether now is the best time.**



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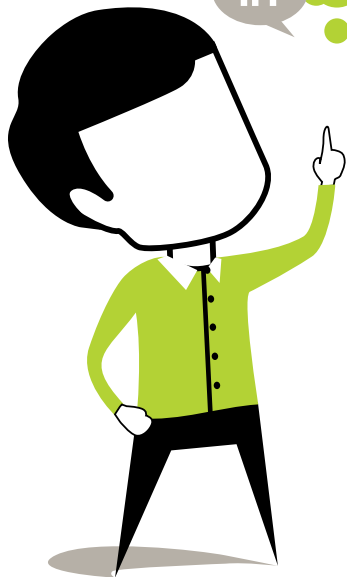
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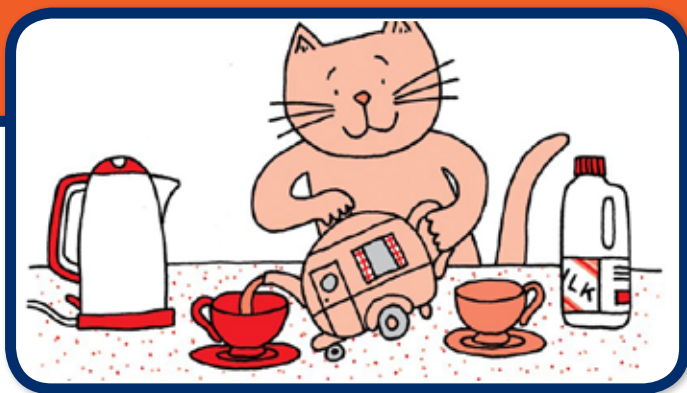
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COMPETITION



WIN 4 TICKETS

to see Nice Work for the Cat and the King

Saturday 9th March

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

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

What exciting full day of activities is this event part of?

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

Closing date for entries is 28th February. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

About the Show:

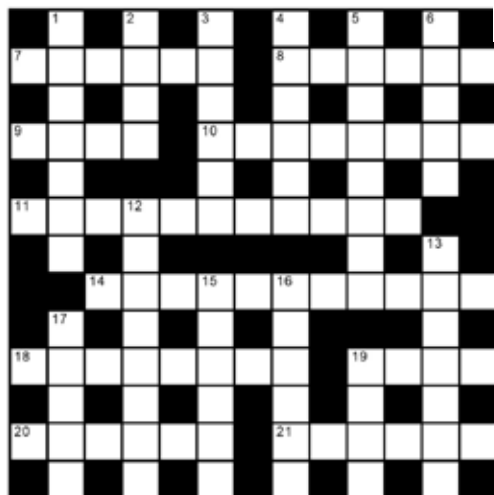
The Royal Money box is almost empty, and the king has to get a job.

But what kind of job would be fit for a king? Butcher? Baker? Candlestick Maker?

It takes many comical disasters before both cat and king find the right job for them.

Bring your future job-seekers for a fun interactive show with one of Britain's favourite children's author-illustrators Nick Sharratt.

crossword



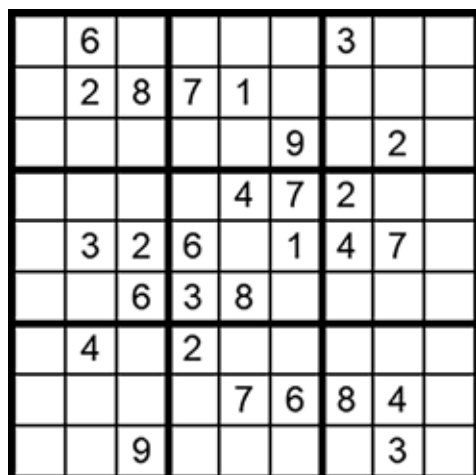
clues

Across

- 7 Gambling emporium (6)
- 8 Char, sear (6)
- 9 Wind instrument (4)
- 10 Backpackers, hikers (8)
- 11 Large houseplant (6,5)
- 14 Matching pants and jacket set (7,4)
- 18 Without penalty, got off ____ (4-4)
- 19 Animal prized for its fur (4)
- 20 Tear-inducing vegetables (6)
- 21 Incorrect, false (6)

Down

- 1 Sheltered place to moor boats (7)
- 2 Climb, ascend (4)
- 3 Medic (6)
- 4 In addition, also (2,4)
- 5 Props to keep paperbacks tidy (4-4)
- 6 Frightening (5)
- 12 Pub seating (3,5)
- 13 Junior king of beasts (4,3)
- 15 Civil disorder (6)
- 16 To make equal, balance (4,2)
- 17 Perfume, fragrance (5)
- 19 Nocturnal insect (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 50

Why do we Love a Superhero?

The Hancock household is eagerly awaiting the release of Avengers: Endgame in less than two months (current release date April 26th).

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say my entire family are hooked on the whole superhero genre. And we're not alone. All over the country there are regular debates about whether Superman would beat Thor in a fight, or why Iron Man is two words while Batman is only one.

Our kids dress up like them and carry packed lunches in plastic boxes emblazoned with their images (actually some adults do this too.) **But why?** According to recent research from Kyoto University in Japan, our love of superheroes starts before we can talk. In a series of experiments, infants as young as six months were shown short animations in which one figure chased and bumped into a second.

Meanwhile, a third figure watched from afar. In version A, the third figure steps in and prevents the collision, while in version B it runs away without intervening. After watching the clips, the infants were presented with replicas of both the intervening and the non-intervening third figures. **They consistently preferred the one who saved the day.** These results suggest that babies are capable of understanding and recognising heroism.

Further experiments showed that extremely young babies couldn't tell the difference between a saviour who was simply in the right place at the right time, and one



who actively stepped in to help. They didn't grasp the nuances. **But by just 18 months old they did understand that difference and preferred the hero.** This suggests that our concept of justice, and heroism develops very early on. As we grow up superhero stories seem to resonate with us. We identify with the themes, with the dilemmas and problems that superheroes face, and **we aspire to their noble impulses and heroic acts.** We identify with them because often they are created in our image, albeit a larger than life version of that image. It helps that most superheroes are flawed. They are not bloodless examples of 'goodness and virtue' but real individuals who are prey to their emotions and environment yet who strive to overcome their foibles and triumph anyway.

Some characters like Batman and Iron Man have overcome trauma to become superheroes. **In psychology this is called post-traumatic growth** and it gives us hope that we too can overcome difficulties in our lives and become stronger people.

There is something both empowering and uplifting about watching your favourite superhero emerge victorious at the end of a story, which is why I will be queuing at the cinema on April 26th with Mrs. Hancock and all the little Hancocks. **See you there.**

By Tom Hancock

Swimming, Super sport!

By Tracey Anderson

Swimming isn't a sport, it's just a way to keep from drowning! So goes the old joke. But swimming is a great way to keep fit, and here's why.

It's a full body workout - Swimming is a great mixture of cardio and strength. It improves endurance and works out all your muscle groups.

It improves mental health - The motion and act of swimming through water is very meditational. The focus it requires reduces stress levels and anxiety.

It's a mood booster - Swimming, like most exercise, produces endorphins encourages the release of serotonin. These chemicals are known to boost your mood.

You're unlikely to injure yourself - Swimming is non-weight-bearing so the risk of injury is very small. It is sweat-free - If you hate getting sweaty, swimming is perfect. The water constantly cools you down.

It's for everyone - Fat, thin, old, young, disabled or able-bodied. Almost anyone can swim.

It has long-term health benefits - Swimming has been found to lower blood pressure, reduce joint pain, improve heart function and lung capacity, and increase bone strength.

It's a great calorie-burner - Swimming burns more calories than running!

Take a trip to your local pool today.



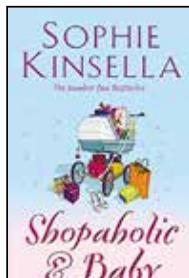
a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

Shopaholic and Baby

by Sophie Kinsella

Justified or not, chick lit gets a bad rap, but not everyone enjoys serious tomes, and if you're looking for something frothy and fun to throw yourself into, then you can't go too far wrong when it comes to Sophie Kinsella's Shopaholic series.



Shopaholic and Baby is the fifth book in the series, and once again features everyone's favourite shopaholic, Becky. Previous books have seen Becky try to take control of her spending habits by following the advice she frequently gives out as a journalist writing about managing personal finances; have the time of her life living in New York and shopping on Fifth Avenue; and marry her dream boyfriend Luke, whilst loving the excuse to spend more money.

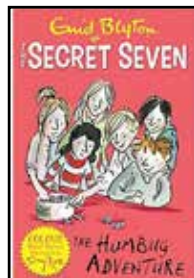
Now Becky has something else to spend her money on. Her baby. From designer nurseries to the coolest pram, there seems to be no limit to what she can shop for. That list includes a celebrity obstetrician, Venetia Carter. On meeting her Becky is shocked to discover that Venetia used to date Luke in college. Will Venetia want to get back together with him? Is Becky's dream marriage under threat?

Most women will be able to relate to the insecurities Becky encounters in this novel as her pregnancy progresses and her body changes. In Becky, Kinsella has created a character who is caring, charming, but at the same time, full of flaws. And that is why readers seem to love her so much.

The Secret Seven: The Humbug Adventure

by Enid Blyton

If you are like me then you probably grew up on a diet of Enid Blyton and a distant world of adventure and fun, where children had far more freedom than we give our offspring these days. This nostalgia probably accounts for the enduring appeal of her books.



This Secret Seven adventure features all of the familiar gang, including Scamper the dog, but it is not a story that you may be familiar with. It is a short story, originally published in 1954 in one of Enid Blyton's annuals. This version, published in 2016, is the first time it has been published in its own right.

The gang have been invited to the house of an old professor to look at Jupiter through his telescope. They aren't particularly looking forward to it and find it boring until they move the telescope around and see someone setting fire to a haystack at Wingfield Farm. Suddenly they are up against time to warn someone before the fire spreads to the nearby barn, and to find out who started it.

Aimed at younger readers than the regular Secret Seven books, this is a great introduction to Enid Blyton, with excellent illustrations by Tony Ross, illustrator of the Horrid Henry books.

Eggs Benedict with Smoked Salmon & Chives

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 20 mins

Serves: 4 (or 2 really hungry people!)

Ingredients

4 eggs
2 tbsp white wine vinegar
2 English muffins or two bagels, halved
Butter for spreading
8 slices smoked salmon
Chopped chives, to serve

For the hollandaise sauce

2 tsp lemon juice
2 tsp white wine vinegar
3 egg yolks
125g unsalted butter, cubed

Method

Hollandaise Sauce: Pour the lemon juice and vinegar into a small bowl, add the egg

yolks and whisk with a balloon whisk until light and frothy. Place the bowl over a pan of simmering water and continue to whisk until the mixture thickens. Add the butter a small amount at a time, whisking constantly until the sauce is thick. If it looks like it might be splitting, remove from the heat and continue to whisk. Season with salt and pepper then and keep warm.

Poached eggs: bring a large pan of water to the boil and add the vinegar. Lower the heat so that the water simmers very gently. Stir the water a little so you create a gentle whirlpool effect, then slide in the eggs one by one. Cook each for about 4 mins, then remove with a slotted spoon. Handy hint - you will see the eggs begin to rise in the water as they reach completion.

Lightly toast and butter the muffins or bagels, then place a couple of slices of the smoked salmon on each half. Top each with an egg, then spoon over your Hollandaise and garnish with chopped chives.

Serves: 4 people
Preparation and cooking
time: 35 minutes



useful numbers

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
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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

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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



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11 Johnsons Cars 0156 4454 081
 12 Crossroads Service Station 0156 4703 225
 20 AP Alloys 07972 852 758
 21 Easylease 0121 693 0573

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19 Proline 0800 956 1315

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1 smarthomes 0121 744 4144

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 35 Oakland Group 01564 758 608

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13 Prestige Multi-Trades 07886 922 280

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9 Guru You 07930 147 799
 19 Equanimity 0844 693 1282

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3 Granite Transformations 01926 675 230
 5 Dream Doors 0121 314 0956
 17 EH Smith 0121 713 7100

Restaurants

2 The Barn at Berryfields 01676 522155

Roofing

12 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276
 14 Roofing & guttering services 07956 228 842
 36 N Bird & Son 0800 195 6946

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

Sudoku Solution
 from page 27

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

Crossword Solution
 from page 27

**Solution to Mind benders**

1. There's Something About Mary
2. Shakespeare In Love
3. Pretty Woman

Mindbenders Solution
 from page 9

My Gardening Valentine

In the run-up to Valentine's Day someone always asks me what they should buy for the gardener in their life.

It's a tricky question to answer. **Many people think we must like cut flowers, but actually I'm not keen and most gardeners I**

know aren't either. We have gardens full of the things after all, and we tend to prefer our plants living and breathing in their natural environment, rather than imported from abroad and wrapped in cellophane.

Unless you know a bit about gardening, and the tastes of your own particular gardener you're probably best-off avoiding plants too. The non-green-fingered venture into dangerous territory when they try to buy plants because there are so many variables. Will it suit the soil? Is it too invasive? **Will it poison the gardener's dog...or children...eek?**

It's a thorny issue (pardon the pun) so here is my go-to gift list guaranteed to make you the Valentine hero of your gardening amour.

Don't buy a sweatshirt which declares 'head-gardener. They are naff, and most gardeners prefer old, comfy clothes which do the job better. However, if you present your gardener with a tough tunic or gardening apron, which is thorn-proof, and which has lots of deep pockets to house secateurs and trowels, they will love you forever.

Then there are wellies. Who knew wellies could be romantic? But gardening folk drool over wellies the way Supermodels drool over Jimmy Choos. And there's so much wellie-choice now. We all prefer something with a thick sole but there are bright and colourful



wellies and traditional ones. For the ultimate in warmth and breathability I can recommend a proper Gore-Tex pair...sheer luxury. Mine remain the favourite Valentine gift my husband ever bought me. He knows how to romance a woman! A proper long-necked watering can, with a brass rose will also earn

you Valentine brownie points. **Bigger isn't necessarily better** though unless your Valentine boasts big biceps! Watering cans are heavy when full. I find 3-4 litres is about the right size.

A bunch of long-stemmed red roses will set you back at least £40 and they might last a few days. For a similar price you can buy the gardener in your life Felco secateurs (with Valentine red handles) and they'll last forever. I know which I'd prefer.

Garden trugs are so practical. Most gardeners I know would be delighted to receive one. The trug is a great gift but even better when filled with a few gardening goodies such as packets of seed, water retaining granules, plant food etc. You could add some hand tools too, such as a trowel and a fork. Make sure they are stainless steel and have long handles for ease of use. And insulated mug or a good flask will always warm the heart of your Valentine because hot drinks don't remain hot for long outside, even on a warm day.

Finally, don't forget gardening vouchers. Often us gardeners spot the perfect plant or gardening accessory when we're strapped for cash, so vouchers are a perfect gift to save for a rainy day...and gardeners love rainy days, Valentine's or not.

Happy Gardening.

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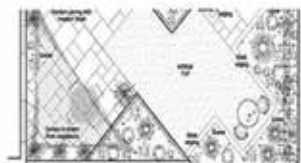
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Gillian Cain, Audi Birmingham, 31 July 2017

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