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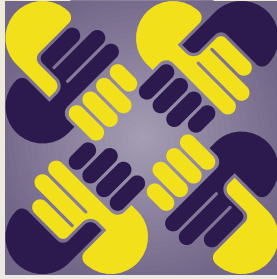
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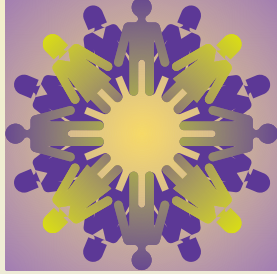
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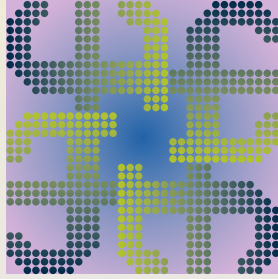
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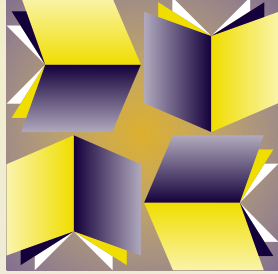
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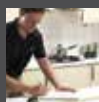
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Christmas countdown

Welcome to the December edition...

By the time this arrives I'm sure you'll all be counting down the days to Christmas, whether it's due to excitement or if you just want life to get back to normal!

Apart from the excitement of the big day, there's always lots of other things going on at this time of year – check out page 32 to see what great new films are on at the cinema this month and what's on at Solihull's Core theatre. If you'd rather curl up in the warmth of your own home, have a look at our book reviews on page 34 or try making panettone from our recipe on page 31.

For those of you that eat too much over Christmas and who want to help others, why not try the Lions Festive Walk from Baddesley Clinton National Trust and Hay Woods on 27th December (more details on page 6). There's a choice of different length routes so you can do what you're comfortable with.

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy and healthy New Year.

Zoe

Zoe Reece

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Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

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community events

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classics from the 80's to the present day. Tickets are £33 per person, including Tribute Act, 3 course meal & DJ. To book call 0121 711 2121 or email sales@ramadasoliuhullhotel.co.uk



27th Lions Festive Walk

27 December

The Knowle & Dorridge Lions Festive Walk from Baddesley Clinton National Trust House & Hay Woods is in aid of Solihull Hospital Charity, CLIC Sargent and local causes. Includes 4 routes up to 10 miles and new parking arrangements. Visit knowleanddorridgeions.com/walk for more details & to download the free entry form to complete and bring on the day.



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14 December

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Festive Feast

18-22 December

Mell Square, Solihull

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New Year's Eve Family Disco

31 December

Crowne Plaza, Solihull

Includes a festive 3 course meal, entertainment for little ones and big kids, and a disco until 1am. £47 per person, kids 12 and under £24.50, free for under 3's. Call 0121 623 9988 to book.

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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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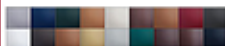
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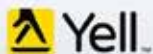
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Mindbenders

Can you find the festive phrases?

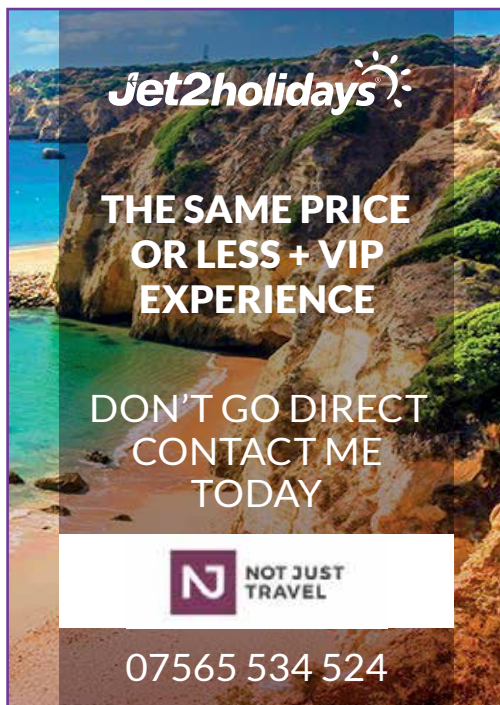
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261 days of snow

Mammoth Mountain has had a record-breaking season with 261 days of snow. A 5-hour drive north of LA puts you in the heart of Mammoth Mountain and offers a world of activities to tick all the boxes. For the ski (and board) lovers amongst us, you'll be able to find 150 named trails, along with 8 parks and 25 lifts, with the season running from November to April, you'll be a pro in no time.

Napa Valley

Over 400 wineries are on offer in Napa Valley, one of the world's premier wine regions. Take a leisurely stroll through the vineyards, chat with the winemakers, and sip on award-winning wines amid beautiful countryside. Wine isn't all that Napa has to offer though. Nature lovers can

cycle along a mountain trail or go hiking, foodies can indulge in handcrafted cheese or try creating mouth-watering appetizers. To enjoy the scenery to its fullest, try a hot air balloon ride or try the 18 holes at the Chardonnay Golf Club.

The City of Angels

The Hollywood Hills Hike is a must-do - explore Griffith Park and take that Instagram-worthy shot of the Hollywood Sign. Search for your favourite celeb on the Hollywood walk of fame, then head down to Venice Beach and take in sweeping views of the ocean and mountains on a Segway tour.

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Whether the sun-kissed California beaches or the redwood forests are calling you, the enchanted Golden State will hold your heart forever. A place where dreams are made, memories are cherished and the impossible seems possible, California needs to be next on your travel list.



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The Christmas Cracker Conundrum

Refuse increases by 30% over the festive season. Can you even remember the plastic tat that fell out of last year's crackers? Thought not. But if your Christmas table is not complete without a cracker there are alternatives.

Try **'12 days of Christmas crackers'** which include an eco-friendlier wooden toy. Recyclable Christmas crackers come with a snap, hat, a joke - **but no gift**. Re-usable crackers can be filled with a gift of choice and some have refillable **'snaps'**. You can also make DIY Christmas crackers by saving cardboard toilet roll and rolling them in a pretty fabric or paper. Fill them with a handwritten joke and gift and tie with



string at each end. **These look festive but are untied – rather than pulled apart. Cracker jokes for DIY crackers**

What does Santa do with fat elves?

He sends them to an Elf Farm

What did Santa do when he went speed dating?

He pulled a cracker

What's a dog's favourite carol?

Bark, the herald angels sing

By Sarah Davey

Wine Wisdom -

Which wine should you choose?

I was always a bit hazy about which wine to serve with which food. Then one day a chef friend explained that it was simply about marrying flavours that blend well or complement each other, much like cooking. I managed to get her to distil her wisdom into this handy guide.

Fish – A delicate fish calls for a delicate wine, such as Pinot Grigio. A robust fish with a rich sauce will require a more full-bodied white like Chardonnay. Salty seafood marries well with champagne.

Chicken or Turkey - Choose a full-flavoured white, like a white Côtes du Rhône, or a delicate red, such as a Frappato.

Juicy red meat – For beef or steak a rich red, such as a Bordeaux or Cabernet Sauvignon will work well or even a Rioja.



Spicy dishes – These require a spicy wine. Look for a Malbec, Syrah or Shiraz.

Vegetarian food - Medium reds, like Merlot, work well, particularly with tomato-based recipes.

Cheese board - Sauternes and Stilton are a perfect match, while Chardonnay works well with brie. A dry Rosé is a good all-rounder.

Remember, the main rule is to pair the characteristics of the dish with the characteristics of the wine. So, a buttery sauce will work well with white a wine also described as 'buttery'. **Experiment and enjoy!**

By Tom Hancock



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WALK

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on 30th January, 7.30pm

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

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

What did Debbie McGee say about Bob Drury's 'The Neil Diamond Story'?

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

Closing date for entries is 10th January. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

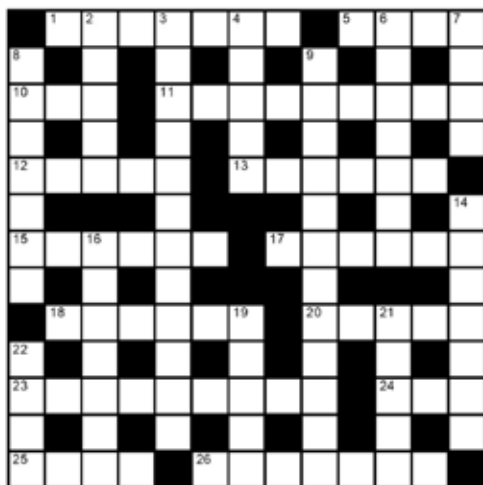
Please note there is no cash value nor exchange for this prize so please don't enter if you cannot attend the date shown above.

About the show:

Described in Las Vegas as one of the world's finest vocal tributes to Neil Diamond, Bob Drury has been astounding audiences with his vocal likeness for ten years during which time he has performed throughout the UK, Europe and in the United States for the American Neil Diamond Fan Club in both Nashville and Las Vegas.

Bob is joined by his amazing band this year and the show tracks Neil's journey from unknown and struggling New York songwriter to international mega-star. The music covers every stage of a staggering music career spanning five decades. Join in with all the favourites such as Cracklin' Rosie, America, Love on the Rocks, Play Me, Hello Again, Forever in Blue Jeans, Beautiful Noise, I'm a Believer, Red Red Wine and of course Sweet Caroline.

crossword



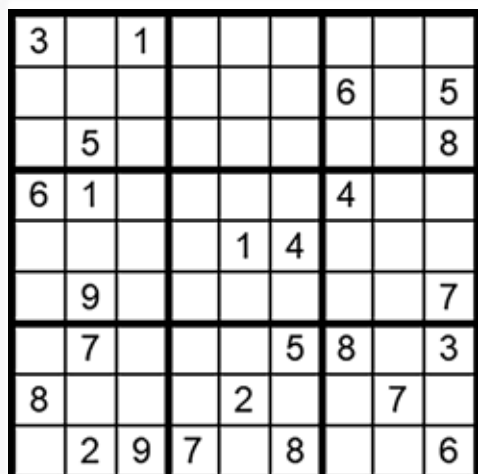
clues

Across

- 1 Outskirts of a city (7)
- 5 Follow orders (4)
- 10 In good physical shape (3)
- 11 Rotor blades that power a plane (9)
- 12 Ogle (3,2)
- 13 Clothes-maker (6)
- 15 Rounded paving stone (6)
- 17 Gentle bell-like sound (6)
- 18 Castle tower (6)
- 20 Ceremony, celebration (5)
- 23 Skittish, highly-strung (9)
- 24 Admirance (3)
- 25 Celtic stringed instrument (4)
- 26 Spotty infectious disease (7)

Down

- 2 Disentangle, release (5)
- 3 Abhorrence, disapprobation (12)
- 4 Increase, improve (5)
- 6 Sandra _____, Speed actress (7)
- 7 Woollen thread (4)
- 8 Crime, infraction (7)
- 9 Unhesitating, resolve (12)
- 14 Small falcon (7)
- 16 Nightclub doorman (7)
- 19 Chart, diagram (5)
- 21 Delete, abolish (5)
- 22 Netting, tracery (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 36



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Have Yourself... ...a crisis-free Christmas

One Christmas our whole family came down with flu; in other years our dog died, the oven exploded, and we had a power cut, although thankfully not all on the same day! Most Christmases are wonderful but sometimes life gets in the way. With a smidgeon of forethought though, you can make all the difference.

First among potential disasters are digestive ones. **A plate of salmonella is definitely not top of most people's Christmas list!** Invest in special thermometers for ovens and fridges and check they're running at the right temperature.

Less serious but still unpleasant are tummy upsets caused by over-indulgence of rich food and alcohol. **Keep a supply of antacids and rehydration salts in your first aid box.** Also stock up on plasters and anti-burn spray because preparing sprouts and getting the turkey in and out of the oven can be surprisingly dangerous tasks, especially after a cocktail or two! Then there are the unavoidable hitches such as illness which, let's face it, can strike any time, even at Christmas. High temperatures and sore throats are no fun at all. Make sure you have ibuprofen and paracetamol to hand, both the junior and adult versions. Make two lists of emergency numbers. Include NHS Direct, an emergency dentist, your gas and electricity suppliers, an emergency plumber, electrician, vet and a locksmith. A garage and taxi service are useful too. Keep one list at home in an easy-to-find place and the other about your person.

Don't forget to buy candles, matches,



a flashlight and some batteries just in case of a power cut.

Finally, there are the avoidable disasters caused by poor planning. Make sure the car is serviced and full of petrol if you have to travel. If you're going abroad check all passports are up to date and that the dog or cat will be cared for. For peace of mind use boarding kennels or a professional pet sitter.

Burglaries increase around Christmas because thieves know there are rich pickings to be had so check your security. Also check

your household insurance is valid and that you have enough cover. Did you know that a third of parents forget to buy batteries for Christmas toys? Avoid disappointment on the day. Run through a check list before you leave the shop: do you need batteries, a battery charger, memory cards, a scart lead or an extra console controller? It's easy to throw the instructions out with the packaging and wrapping paper so take care, and furthermore, if you think there is something wrong with the gift DO NOT take it to pieces. You will invalidate your warrantee!

You can't prevent all crises. Prepare by all means but try to keep a sense of perspective and humour and hopefully you'll have a happy Christmas no matter what life throws at you! The year we all had flu we simply postponed Christmas and had the full works a few days later instead when we all felt much better.

By Sarah Davey

Mini Panettone

Little festive treats

Preparation time: 45 minutes (allow 4-5 hours for proving time)

Cooking time: 20 mins

Makes: 6

Ingredients

250g good quality plain flour
1 tsp dried yeast
Pinch of salt
100ml whole milk, warmed (not hot)
3 eggs (Two beaten together, 1 extra)
1 tsp vanilla extract
50g golden caster sugar, plus extra for dusting
100g softened butter
Zest and juice of one orange
100g raisins
100g sultanas
100g mixed peel (for non-peel-lovers you can substitute cranberries)

Method

Soak the fruit overnight in the orange juice. Mix the flour and salt, the yeast and the milk

in a mixer with a dough hook. You can do it by hand, it just takes longer. Gradually mix in two beaten eggs and the vanilla. Knead until the dough is smooth and springy. Leave in a bowl, covered with a damp cloth and allow to rise until doubled in size.

Add the sugar, butter and the yolk from the remaining egg. Mix again, either with the machine, or by hand, until the dough is smooth again. Add the fruit and zest and knead quickly until it's all incorporated into the dough. Leave in a bowl, covered with a damp cloth, in a cool place for at least two hours until doubled in size again. You can leave it in the fridge overnight if you prefer. Line a large, six-holed muffin tray with paper cases. Divide the dough into six portions and roll into balls. Place one ball into each muffin case, cover with a damp cloth and leave for 20 minutes.

Heat the oven to 180C / 160 fan or Gas mark 4. Brush the tops of the panettone with the remaining egg whites and dust with caster sugar. Bake for 15-20 minutes until the muffins have risen and are golden in colour. Leave to cool on a wire rack.

Variation - Add some brandy to the overnight soak in orange juice for a little extra kick.



Preparation time: 45 mins
Cooking time: 20 mins
Makes: 6

a taster of what's coming up...

CINEMA



Jumanji: The Next Level from 13 December

The gang is back but the game has changed. As they return to Jumanji to rescue one of their own, they discover that nothing is as they expect. The players will have to brave parts unknown and unexplored in order to escape the world's most dangerous game.

Cats

from 20 December

Featuring Lloyd Webber's iconic music and a world-class cast of dancers, this film reimagines the musical for a new generation with spectacular production design, state-of-the-art technology, and dance styles ranging from ballet to contemporary, hip-hop to jazz, street to tap.



Playing with Fire from 27 December

When fire superintendent Jake and his elite team of firefighters come to the rescue of three siblings, they quickly realize that no amount of training could prepare them for their most challenging job yet - babysitters. The firefighters have their lives and jobs turned upside down and quickly learn that kids - much like fires - are wild and unpredictable.



To book please visit www.cineworld.co.uk

THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull



Robin Hood Pantomime 13 December - 5 January

Travel deep into the heart of magical Sherwood Forest, where the men wear the tights and the women wear the trousers. This family pantomime is jam packed with daring duels, stunning sets, outrageous costumes and a very merry man in a dress that will set your heart a quiver.

Santa In Love

20 to 24 December

Join Santa and his friends in this fun filled family musical complete with games, giggles

and Christmas songs. This show is aimed at the very young and their parents and Santa will be available after the show to meet your little ones and give them a present.



The Billy Fury Years

18 January

Hailed as "the best Fury since Fury", Michael King and his fantastic collection of musicians

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Fury style.



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Kids' Page

Solve the clues then find the answers in the letter grid.

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

Hark the Herald _____ Sing
 Ding _____! Merrily on High
 Silent _____
 _____ the Red-Nosed Reindeer
 _____ Claus is Coming to Town
 Once in _____ David's City
 The _____ Noel
 The _____ and the Ivy
 O _____ All Ye Faithful
 We _____ Kings
 Joy to the _____
 _____ in a Manger
 Good _____ Wenceslas
 Deck the _____
 _____ the Snowman

RUDOLPH'S FIENDISH Festive Riddle

What can be FOUND ONCE IN the tree,
 TWICE IN the crACKERS but NEVER IN the
 PUDDING?

Did you know...?

10 MILLION turkeys are cooked each
 Christmas in the UK!



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

Word Grid Solution

Answer to Rudolph's Riddle
 The letter 'r'

a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

Disobedience

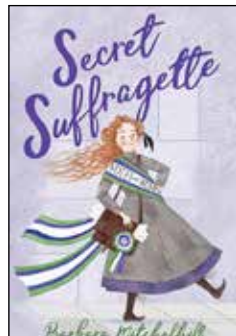
by Naomi Alderman



Look beneath the surface of British life and you will find many different communities and cultures – some more hidden than others. Naomi Alderman's 2006 debut novel deals with one such hidden, but long-standing culture: Orthodox Judaism. Ronit is a young woman living in New York. She emigrated to America as a way of escaping the strict Orthodox Jewish community that she had belonged to in London. But one day she receives a phone call. Her father – an esteemed and respected Rabbi – has died. Torn by duty, the desire for a sense of closure, and uncertainty of what she will find, Ronit makes the journey back home. At the very least she can clear out her father's house and maybe reconcile with some part of her past. However, this journey sets her on a collision course between her new modern life and traditional Jewry. Not least an encounter with her childhood girlfriend, Esti, and a reminder that tradition is a powerful force and one resistant to change. Received with some controversy when published this is a fascinating insight into a world that is often hidden. A community trying to hold onto their traditions when the modern world is changing. Brought up in a Jewish community, Alderman writes convincingly from the perspective of her characters and peppers the novel with Jewish theology, thought, and culture (including some delicious sounding Jewish recipes in the appendix).

Secret Suffragette

by Barbara Mitchelhill



In the years just before the First World War the suffragette movement in England was in full swing and it is this that provides the setting for his historical novel. Daisy is 12 years old and dreams of following in the footsteps of Florence Nightingale and becoming a nurse. However, it's not

that simple. Born and bred in Bow, London, her family is poor with her parents working hard to try to afford even the basics. So, the pressure is on for her to leave school and work in the local factory. After all, according to her father, why does a girl need to be educated? Then one day the Suffragettes arrive and start holding meetings to encourage people to support their cause. Despite instructions from her father, Daisy and her mother sneak off to attend one. This single event leads to her family being turned upside down and propels Daisy into a world that she could never have imagined – yet one that seems perfectly normal and logical to us today. A world where women have the right to vote and live their lives as they wish. A world where the politicians will have no choice but to listen to the demands of education and rights for all. This is a great introduction to the suffragette movement for young readers, and it will no doubt come as a shock to many that women and girls were treated as second class citizens only 100 years ago.

useful numbers

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NHS non-emergency 111

Grove Surgery 0121 705 1105

Northbrook Group Practice 0121 746 5000

Hobs Moat Medical Centre 0121 742 5211

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Council

Solihull Council 0121 704 6000

Utilities

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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

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

Sudoku Solution
from page 27

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

Crossword Solution
from page 27



1. Three wise men
2. Season's greetings
3. Goodwill to all men

Mindbenders Solution
from page 16



The Holly and the Ivy

By Rachael Leverton

*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.*

There's no doubt that holly and ivy are synonymous with Christmas. This dates back to pre-Christian era when pagans used evergreen decorations in their mid-winter celebrations. It's not hard to see why they were attracted to these beautiful plants which offer a promise of better times to come during the most barren time of the year.

Early Christians adopted them too and imbued holly particularly with Christian symbolism. In the carol, ivy isn't actually mentioned again until the last verse which is a repeat of the first.

It has a cameo role because of earlier songs, such as 'The Contest of The Ivy and The Holly,' in which the attributes of holly (male) and ivy (female) are compared. Our ancestors lived close to the earth and the seasons and were open to symbolism. As modern gardeners we might be sceptical of the symbolism, but we can embrace the glory of these seasonal plants.

Ivy (Hedera) comes in many sizes, from the tiny-leaved '**Spetchley**' to the hand-sized leaves of '**Maple Leaf**'. It also comes in a beautiful variety of colours from the rich green, crimped leaves of '**Parsley crested**' which makes great ground cover, to the gorgeous red-stemmed yellow leaves of the climber '**Sunrise**'.

For winter baskets I'd recommend the lime-green '**Ursula**' and her grey-leaved friend '**Frederick**'.

Ivy is a doddle to grow. There are only a few things to remember. Cut it back in spring to encourage new growth and take cuttings between October and March when the growth is woody. Yellow varieties need sunshine and don't let any of it grow into your eaves. Other than that, it is your undemanding gardening friend.

Holly (Ilex) is pretty easy-going too. It will grow almost anywhere except really water-logged soil. It's tolerant of pollution, salt and wind and grows really slowly, so it's great for small gardens in the city and by the sea.

Protect it from rabbits if they frequent your garden as they love to eat the bark. Trim it in August if you have to and remove plain green shoots on variegated varieties. Take cuttings in the late summer or autumn. It does resent root disturbance once it's established so make sure you plant it in the right place first time.

Hollies are male or female but not necessarily named to help you distinguish. '**Silver Queen**' is actually male and '**Martin**' is female! You'll need both for berries so talk to an expert at the nursery or garden centre to be sure...or google the answer on your phone! If you only have room for one holly bush, grow a self-fertile variety such as '**J C Van Tol**'.

Merry Christmas and Happy Gardening!

The Introvert's Guide to the Office Christmas Party

Office Christmas parties are queer affairs where we drink and socialise with folk we might not choose to drink and socialise with on any other night of the year. At best they offer a bit of cringeworthy fun, at worst they strike fear into our hearts. Introverts in particular struggle with enforced bonhomie at large events.

For those of us who aren't social butterflies, what are our options?

Do we have to endure the occasion, or might it be possible to enjoy it?

Dutch courage may seem like the only way to get through the evening but tanking up on alcohol will almost certainly make things worse. Although it's a party in name, remember this is a work-related event so limit your alcohol intake to ensure you remain in control of your faculties, especially if under the influence you feel you might be tempted to give vent to your feelings of frustration at being passed over for promotion! A good rule of thumb is no more than two alcoholic drinks at any work function...**even a festive one.**

It is estimated that at least 25% of the population are introverts so at least a quarter of your co-workers probably feel like you do about the party. Look for people standing on the edge, fidgeting with their glass and looking awkward. These are your people so take a deep breath and strike up a conversation with them. Concentrate on effective eye contact when you introduce yourself. Get into the habit of noticing the other person's eye



colour. Don't worry about remembering it or commenting on it, just notice it. This helps to create an instant non-verbal connection and build rapport. It makes you seem confident, trustworthy and likeable.

Have a few safe conversation topics in your armoury: good ones are the weather, movies, restaurants, books (you can either find common ground or ask for and offer recommendations), and light news topics (steer clear of Brexit though, and anything to do with the election). Also avoid work talk, that's not the point of the event.

If you're stuck in a conversation with someone you find offensive, dull or with whom you have nothing in common it can be hard to keep a conversation going. A polite **'So nice to chat with you, catch you later...'** should be an adequate sign-off as you make your leave. The point of a party is to mingle so this won't seem unfriendly.

Remember - even if you would rather undergo root canal surgery than attend the office party it's worth showing your face. Go along, have a drink and a mince pie then make a polite-but-early exit if you really can't cope. People won't generally mind or even remember that you left early but they might question why you didn't show up at all.

By Tracey Anderson

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