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Welcome to the February issue of The Knowle & Dorridge Directory.

With Valentine's Day on the 14th and Chinese New Year on the 16th, 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 Henley, the golf and country club in Henley in-Arden; The Bell in Tanworth-in-Arden, renowned for their great food; or the Barn at Berryfields in Meriden, with views over the lovely Warwickshire countryside.

If you're more interested in partying, check out the upcoming events at Nailcote Hall and the Land Rover Sports and Social Club. And 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 quiz night, food fayre, ballroom dancing workshop and much more. Enjoy your leisure time, however you spend it!

Zoe

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

www.knowleanddorridgedirectory.com



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Locally designed by: hotlobster design ltd **Printed by:** Warwick Printing Company

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community events

Valentine's Quiz Night

Knowle Village Hall

Thursday 15th February, 7.30pm

Light refreshments are available. Bring your own "liquid refreshment!" Raffle with great prizes. Tickets cost £6 per person and teams can be up to 6 people. Call Stephen Yeomans on 01564 778163 for tickets. The Quiz is in aid of the Hall's refurbishment fund.

Strictly Ballroom Dance Workshop

Saturday 17th February

11am -3.30pm

Land Rover Sports & Social Club, Solihull, B92 9LN

If you've always wanted to learn all the fabulous dances seen on TV, but don't have time to commit to a weekly dance class then



Donahey's Learn to Ballroom Dance in a Day workshop is for you! With 4 hours of expert tuition geared towards absolute beginners, you'll enjoy learning some of the most popular ballroom dances seen on BBC Strictly Come Dancing. You'll learn the Waltz, Foxtrot, Cha Cha & Jive. To book please visit www.donaheys.co.uk/classes/learn-to-dance-in-a-day/

Fine and Local Food Fayre

Saturday 17th February,

9am - 5pm

Mell Square, High Street and Mill Lane, Solihull

Sample the best of locally sourced food and produce from a range of top quality suppliers at this market, which is held on the third Saturday of each month.

Hedge Laying

Sunday 18th February

Brueton Park, Solihull

Get involved in hedge laying and help to create a living fence which encourages new growth. For more information visit www.solihullcv.org.uk. To contact Solihull

Conservation Volunteers for more information or to book onto the event, email davidcollins1@aol.com or ring Dave Fernie on 0121 459 1697.

Mum2Mum Market

The Renewal Family Centre, Vulcan

Road, Solihull, B91 2JR

Saturday 3rd March, 10.30-12.30

Buy or sell second hand children's items. £2 entry, kids go free.

Visit www.mum2mummarket.co.uk

Table Top Sale

Arden Academy, Station Road, Knowle

Sunday 4th March, 10.30 -12.30

Stallholders: £8 for a table / £5 for a clothes rail. Entry: Adults 70p / Children FREE. Email adminptfa@arden.solihull.sch.uk for more information.

Solihull Blossomfield Townswomen Guild

The Royal British Legion, Union Road, Solihull

(opposite House of Fraser)

The first Thursday of each month, 7.15pm

We are a friendly group of ladies of various ages who like to laugh and talk a lot. We have speakers on a variety subjects. At our February meeting Laurence Ince will be taking a Nostalgic Look of Solihull in the 1950's. The guild offers a full and varied programme with outings, theatre trips, social, craft afternoons and a lunch club. We are very welcoming to new members - so as a new year resolution - come and join us! For more information phone Carol on 0121 705 0874.

KNOWLE LIBRARY

- **Jellybeans** - held monthly on a Thursday morning for story-time and rhymes for the under 5's
- **Alphabet Club** - and story-time session for the under 5's, held on alternate Mondays at 2 - 2.30pm
- **Knowle Readers Circle** - meet monthly on Fridays at 2.15pm
- **Knowle Society** - available each Saturday morning for

local history enquiries

- **Under-fives Rhyme Time** - every Friday at 2pm
- **Coffee mornings** - on the first Thursday of the month at 10.30 - 11.30am
- **New monthly Saturday Craft Club** - for ages 10 - 12 years at 11am - 12noon

www.solihull.gov.uk/Resident/Libraries/Find-a-library/knowlelibrary



www.progressionarchitects.com

01564 730 191

info@progressionarchitects.com

Chartered Architects Gary Winn RIBA and Dean Poulton RIBA are Progression Architects and have been based in Solihull since 1992. They are about to celebrate 25 years in practice.

The practice specialises in the design of domestic house extensions, one off houses and conversions, although they also have some corporate blue chip clients.

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At Progression we are also Chartered Town Planners and members of the Royal Town Planning Institute. We specialise in dealing with planning applications and negotiating with the Local Authorities. We also prepare, submit and attend Planning Appeals, where applications are refused, putting our case forward from an applicant's point of view.

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

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how do you like your pancakes?

February 13th is Shrove Tuesday and I will be tossing pancakes with the best of them.

Usually I am a traditionalist and favour lemon and sugar topping but this year in the interests of research I canvassed my friends for their favourite sweet and savoury pancake fillings, and tried them out. Here are my top seven.

Nutty chocolate spread and banana -

This tasty filling bulks the pancakes out, and makes the batter go further. Perfect if there are lots of people at your pancake supper.

Fresh mango and Greek yoghurt

with a splash of Cointreau - Very sophisticated and utterly delicious

Fruits of the forest with vanilla ice cream and

a splash of Amaretto liqueur - This one was a revelation. The liqueur works brilliantly with the fruit, and the hot pancakes with cold ice cream is a

sublime combination. Clearly I have classy friends!

Blueberries and maple syrup - This contribution

from an American friend goes well with thick or thin pancakes. She tops hers with bacon, but you can leave that out. If you like.

Mushrooms, tomatoes and bacon

- for a British brunch-style pancake, or maybe a savoury supper.

Wilted spinach and Ricotta cheese -

Sprinkle with a little fresh nutmeg and this makes a very tasty vegetarian supper.

Stewed rhubarb and crème fraîche - You can

prepare your rhubarb as tart or sweet as you like. I liked mine tart. The creme fraiche works really well with it. I scraped some vanilla seeds into mine and beat them in before serving. This is officially my new favourite way to eat pancakes. Enjoy.

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

CINEMA

Phantom Thread from 2nd February

This takes place in the glamorous world of post-war London, where dressmaker Reynolds Woodcock and his sister dress royalty, film stars and dames with their distinctive style. When Reynolds falls for a young, strong-willed woman, his work is disrupted by love. He believes himself cursed, that love will never work for him, and finds his previously controlled, ordered life unravelling around him.



being effectively abandoned by their commanders. Led by Captain Stanhope, who frequently turns to drink to ease his shattered nerves, they know their chances of survival are slim. But in spite of that, young recruit Raleigh is determined to see them through – not least because Stanhope is his sister's fiancé.



To book please visit
www.cineworld.co.uk

THEATRE

The Core Theatre, Solihull
(formerly Solihull Arts Complex)



Roman J. Israel, Esq. from 2nd February

Roman is an idealistic lawyer who's been doggedly fighting the good fight. But when his partner has a heart attack, he learns some unsavoury details about his firm. Forced to take on the role of the firm's frontman in his partner's absence, he discovers that the company has a record of going against his values of helping the poor and dispossessed, and finds himself in the midst of an existential crisis.



Sing-a-Long-a Beauty and the Beast

Friday 23rd February
2pm and 7pm

This is a screening of the hit 2017 film with lyrics on screen, not a live stage show. There is a host who does a 20 minute pre-show prior to the film and returns after the interval but is not on stage during the movie. YOU, the audience, are the stars in a fun-packed interactive celebration of this fabulous new Disney film!

The Lionel Richie Songbook

Saturday 24th February 8pm
Endorsed by Lionel Richie, this brand-new production features a stellar



line-up of world class musicians including the awesome talent of Malcolm Pitt as the voice of Lionel Richie in this high octane show which includes all the greatest hits including 'Easy', 'Say You Say Me', 'Stuck On You', 'Dancing On The Ceiling', 'Three Times A Lady', 'Hello', 'All Night Long' and many more...

My Fair Lady



6th – 10th March

This much-loved family musical for all ages returns to The Core, performed by the award-winning Knowle Musical Society. Lerner & Loewe's My Fair Lady, based on George Bernard Shaw's play 'Pygmalion', is the winner of a host of Tony and Olivier awards and includes memorable classics such as 'I could have danced all night', 'On the street where you live' and 'Get me to the church on Time'.

To book please visit www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Journey's End from 2nd February

This film takes us to the front lines of the First World War, where a company of British soldiers awaits a German attack after



3-Course Dinner

Seafood Sharing Platter: Sauté King Prawns, Marinated Crayfish, Smoked Salmon and Crab Cakes served with Caper & Lemon Mayonnaise

Homemade Duck & Cointreau Parfait accompanied with Dressed Leaves and Crostini

Brie and Red Onion Marmalade Tartlet
garnished with Confit Cherry Tomatoes and Roquette Salad

Cauliflower and Broccoli Soup served with a Crusty Bread Roll

Roast Breast of Chicken filled with a Tarragon Mousse
served with a White Wine and Chive Sauce

Pan Fried Fillet of Hake resting on Sauté of Spinach and New Potatoes
surrounded by a Rich Nut Brown Butter

Duo of Pork, Crisp Belly & Slow Braised Shoulder of Pork
served with Sauté Kale and Cider Cream Sauce

Thai Spiced Risotto Cakes resting on Crisp Pak Choi and Green Curry Sauce

Assiette of Desserts to Share

Mango and Passion Fruit Crème Brûlée

Soft Meringue filled with Pineapple and Kiwi Fruit

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MARCH

Sat 3rd **THE 'GEORGE MICHAEL' TRIBUTE SHOW with RANDALL BUTLER**
Rick's Singing all of George Michael's hits as well as the Wham classics, including Club Tropicana, I'm your man, Faith, Careless Whisper and Fastlove. This flawless tribute to the late George Michael is a show not to be missed. **£32.50**

Sat 10th **MOTOWN DIVAS SHOW with THE DREAMETTES**
Rick's A Stunning Trio of Ladies in full Motown Glamour Singing and Dancing to original choreographed routines, guaranteed to fill the dance floor with all your favourite Motown hits including Diana Ross and The Supremes, Martha Reeves and The Vandellas, Tina Turner, Mary Wells and Aretha Franklin. **£35.00**

Sun 11th **MOTHERING SUNDAY in the OAK ROOM RESTAURANT**
£35.00
Celebrate Mother's Day Lunch with guitarist Stuart Toogood, in the beautiful surroundings of The Oak Room Restaurant. **Under 12's £17.50**

Sat 17th **ST. PATRICK'S DAY PARTY with JARZINO**
THE MARQUEE Enjoy 'the craic' at our St. Patrick's Day themed Party Night with the great party band Jarzino and our DJ Franco O'Polino!! **£37.50**

Fri 23rd **'THE BEATLES PARTY' with THE LENNON AND MCCARTNEY EXPERIENCE**
Rick's Come and join us with the fabulous Lennon and McCartney Experience with all the hits and the unmistakable sounds from the Fab Four, 'She Loves You, Help, Yesterday, Hey Jude and lots lots more! **£32.50**

Sun 25th **AN AFTERNOON TEA PARTY with VINTAGE VOICES**
Rick's Take a nostalgic trip back in time with our Vintage Duo. Reminisce with well-known classic songs of the 40's and 50's era at our Afternoon Tea Party. **£25.00**

APRIL

Sun 1st **EASTER SUNDAY in the OAK ROOM RESTAURANT**
£35.00
Enjoy Easter Sunday Lunch in the beautiful surroundings of The Oak Room Restaurant. **Under 12's £17.50**

Sat 14th **'BACK TO THE 80'S' PARTY with 80'S EXPERIENCE**
THE MARQUEE Celebrate a night of nostalgia with the greatest hits of the 80's. The 5 piece band will take you back to the days of fun, frivolity and great music from the 80's era. **£35.00**

Sat 28th **THE SPRING PINK BALL for BREAST CANCER CHARITIES with NOLAN BAND**
THE MARQUEE A Stunning 'Black/Pink Tie' Ball raising funds for Breast Cancer medical equipment. After our Fund Raising Raffle and Auction, Dance the Night away with the Superb 'Nolan Band' Plus after show Disco with DJ Franco. **£49.50**

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Valentine's Day

Wednesday 14th February

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meal at The Bell... candles, open fire,
good food and great wine.

Chinese New Year

Saturday 17th February

Come and join us for our 5 course
Chinese Banquet, all handmade by
our Chefs for this special occasion

Future events

Saturday 10th March: Mother's Day Saturday Special

Book now to get 25% off our Mother's Day
Menu on Saturday lunchtime

Sunday 11th March: Mother's Day

We are already booking up quickly,
so book your table now to avoid disappointment

Saturday 17th March: St Patrick's Day

Celebrate St Patrick's Night with a free oyster
with every pint of Guinness and try our amazing
Lamb Stew with Colcannon Mash

Friday 30th March – Sunday 1st April: Easter Weekend

Enjoy one of our roasts after all that chocolate!

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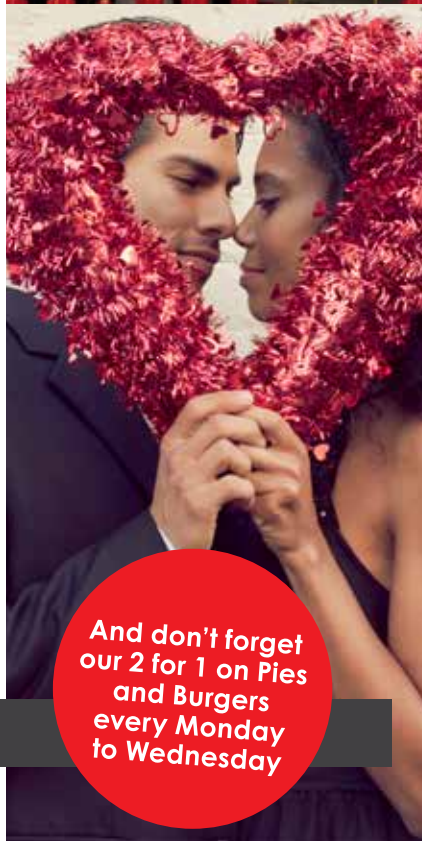
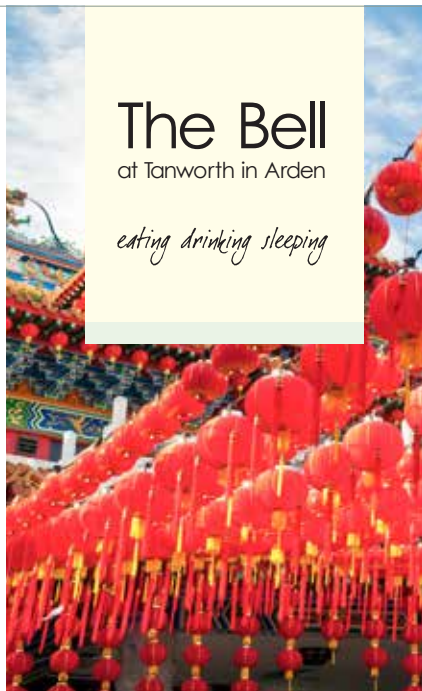
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Tickets online from
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There are other Rod Stewart tribute acts, but none is as convincing as Garry Pease. He looks like Rod Stewart and he sounds like him too! In an all-action, non-stop tribute show, Garry performs all of the favourites from Rod Stewart's vast portfolio of songs.

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The Sugarbliss Cake Decorating Supplies Shop, based in Knowle, stocks everything you need to make your very own cakes. Whether you're looking for rolled-out icing, cake boards, cake boxes or cake toppers, Sugarbliss will have the product for you. We also offer an edible printing service, which allows you to have your favourite pictures as a cake topper! All Sugarbliss cakes are freshly baked to perfection in our 'Cakery', and are made with the highest-quality ingredients to ensure all of our creations taste as delicious as they look. We offer over 36 cake flavours, and also specialise in eggless, vegan, and dairy-free cakes.

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***Pilates** 09.10 to 10.10 & 10.20 to 11.20

at Downing Hall, Knowle, B93 0JU



THURSDAYS

***Pilates** 19.30 to 20.30

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classic films for valentine's day?

You could go out for an expensive meal, or buy a bunch of overpriced red roses...or you could curl up with a glass of wine in front of a classic romantic film. There's something for everyone, whether coupled-up or happily single.

Annie Hall – This was probably the father of all romantic comedies. Alvy (Allen) is a cynical pessimist while Annie (Diane Keaton) is a ditsy, clumsy talented singer and photographer. If you've never seen it, don't expect a neat ending (this is Woody Allen) but it showcases love in all its messy absurdness, and is sharp, funny and never cheesy.

Ghost – This was 1990's second highest grossing movie (Home Alone came out top). Patrick Swayze plays Sam, murdered in the opening



scenes. His spirit tries to warn his grieving lover (Demi Moore) that her life too is in danger. To do this he enlists the help of a reluctant psychic played by Whoopie Goldberg. The result is by turns tender, funny, and bittersweet. You will never hear Unchained Melody again without shedding a tear.

Pretty Woman – This is rather cheesy but has survived the test of time (mostly). It's a Cinderella story really as Vivian (played by Julie Roberts), a prostitute with a heart of gold, is hired by a businessman (Richard Gere) as an escort and turns his life upside down.

As Good as It Gets – No cheese here, just dry wit and snarky humour, delivered perfectly by Jack Nicholson playing Melvin Udall, a misanthropic author with OCD who falls for Carol (Helen Hunt), a waitress who can't stand him. It's a story of redemption.

Moonstruck – If you like your romances complex then this is the film for you. Italian-American widow Loretta (played by Cher) accepts a marriage proposal from her doltish boyfriend, Johnny, but then finds herself falling for his younger brother, Ronny (Nick Cage). She resists, but Ronny blames his brother for the accident in which he lost his hand and has no scruples about pursuing her in Johnny's absence. As Loretta falls further in love she learns that she's not the only one in her family with a secret romance. Cher is a surprisingly good actor and the chemistry between the leads is great.

The Wedding Singer – This engaging film is actually a parody of all things eighties. But the leads play their roles sincerely and that's what makes this work. Robbie (Adam Sandler sporting a fabulous mullet) is a singer, while Julia (Drew Barrymore) is a waitress. They are both in relationships with the wrong people but fortune intervenes to help them discover each other. This is pure romantic cheese, but it's top quality cheese so serve with only the best crackers.

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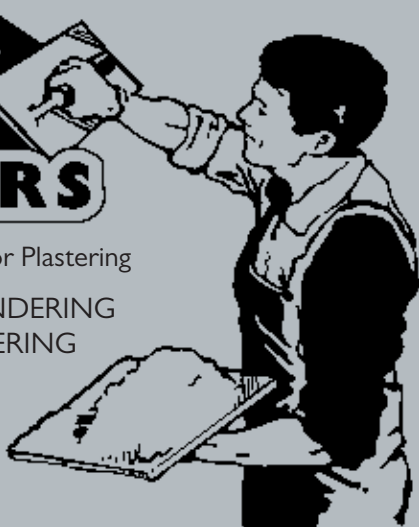
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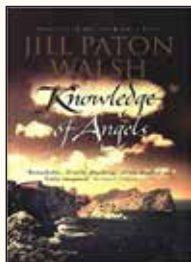
Knowledge of Angels

by Jill Paton Walsh

Jill Paton Walsh is an extraordinarily versatile writer. Many will know her for her numerous works for children, and more recently for her work continuing the legacy of Dorothy L Sayers' Peter Wimsey novels. In addition to this, she has written a number of intriguing and thought provoking novels for adults, and 'Knowledge of Angels' is an excellent example of these two characteristics. The story is set on a Mediterranean island in the fifteenth century, described in almost cinematic detail in the opening pages, as Paton Walsh invites us to contemplate the nature of fiction and storytelling. To this closed community come two strangers – one from the outside, a castaway found by local fishermen, and one from within, a girl seemingly raised by wolves in the forests of the island. One is as eloquent as the other is savage, but their fates become irretrievably tied together as their stories progress.

At the heart of the book lie a number of questions of belief. Palinor, the castaway, professes to have no religion, which poses a challenge to the authority of the Inquisition on the island. Amara, the wolf child, seems unredeemably animal in her behaviour, but begins to grow under the care of the nuns of Sant Clara, raising the issue of nature and nurture. Both of their stories are also about love, and self-knowledge, and what is and is not possible.

Yet the book is written in such a way, that these weighty questions are explored at the same time as creating a page-turning thoroughly engrossing story, in which the reader is drawn in turn into the lives of Amara and Palinor. Disturbing, sensitive and deeply affecting, this is a book that will keep you thinking for a very long time.



Stormbreaker

by Anthony Horowitz

The first novel in Horowitz's phenomenally successful Alex Rider series, this is a must for fans of action, adventure and James Bond style one liners. Alex Rider is a seemingly ordinary 14 year old boy. However, when his uncle is killed in a car accident, his world begins to unravel. An orphan,

Alex finds that without the protection of his guardian he is in the hands of his uncle's employers – and they are not a bank, but MI6! Horowitz keeps the reader moving quickly from action sequence to action sequence, with a liberal amount of humour and contemporary references along the way. The structure is familiar to Bond fans, and once you have suspended your disbelief at the idea of a teenage spy, it all becomes gripping and plausible. In particular, the gadgets Alex uses and the villainous Herod Sayle will appeal to teenage readers – while the intriguingly sinister character of Yassen Gregorovitch is introduced here, ready to be developed further through the rest of the series.

Ideal for fans of ripping yarns and reluctant readers alike, you will find that one chapter is never enough, as Horowitz is the master of the cliff-hanger ending. A 12 year old of my acquaintance told me recently that this book is 'even better than the film' – if you know any 12 year olds, then you will know that I need not say any more than that!



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safer internet day

Safer Internet Day is now celebrated globally in February each year to promote the safe and positive use of digital technology.

The day helps to highlight positive uses of technology and to explore how we create a better and safer online community. This year's slogan is Create, Connect and Share

Respect: A better internet starts with you.

Here are some steps we can all take to stay safe online:

Create complex passwords - Create strong, unique passwords for all your critical accounts. Corporate hacks are commonplace now. One database breach can reveal tens of thousands of user passwords. If you reuse your passwords, a hacker can take the leaked data from one attack and use it to login to your other accounts. The best advice is to use a password manager to help you create and store strong passwords for all of your accounts.

Boost your network security - Now that your logins are safer, make sure that your connections are secure. When you are at home or at work a password-protected router will encrypt your data. When you are out and about you might be tempted to use free, public Wi-Fi. But this is often unsecured, which means it's relatively easy for a hacker to access your device or information. If you access the internet a lot when you are away from home it's worth investing in a Virtual Private Network (VPN). A VPN is a piece of software that creates a secure connection over the internet, so you can safely connect from anywhere.

Use a firewall - This is an electronic barrier that blocks unauthorized access to your computers and devices. It is often included with comprehensive security software. A firewall ensures that all of the devices connected to your network are secured, including Internet



of Things (IoT) devices like smart thermostats and webcams. This is important since many IoT devices aren't equipped with their own security measures, giving hackers a vulnerable point of entry to your entire network.

Watch what you click - Many of today's online threats are based on phishing or social engineering, when you are tricked into revealing personal or sensitive information for fraudulent purposes. Spam emails, phony "free" offers, online quizzes all use these tactics to entice you to click on dangerous links or give up your personal information.

Share selectively - Be cautious about what you share, particularly when it comes to your identity information. Information could be used to impersonate you, or guess your passwords and logins.

Think mobile! - Mobile devices face new risks: dangerous apps and fraudulent links sent by text message. Don't respond to messages from strangers, and only download apps from official app stores after reading reviews first. Make sure that your security software is enabled on your mobile, just like your computers and other devices.

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That failure is ok - Of course he dropped stitches and tangled his wool but Grandma told him it was ok to stop, and start again, and encouraged him not to give up at the hurdles.

The sense of achievement - When he presented me with his first little coaster he was proud and thrilled. He loved that I put it on my desk and that my coffee cup sits on it while I write. Every time he comes in, even two years later he mentions it. For the Christmas just gone I received a lovely crocheted hat made by him, with help from his Grandma. When I wore it out on Christmas Day he nearly burst with pride.

I don't know if he will continue to crochet but even if stops he will retain the other life skills his Grandmother has imparted, and I may well have another natty hat by then too.



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Here are five simple ways to tell if it's time to check your hearing:

You often ask people to repeat themselves

- It sounds as though people around you are mumbling all the time and you find it hard to hear people unless they're facing you directly. It's more common to experience hearing loss in the high frequencies so another sign is having trouble understanding women and children who tend to have higher-pitched voices.

Your family complains that the TV is too loud

- If you're turning up the volume to a point where those around you complain about how loud it is, it might be time to pay attention, especially since listening to excessively loud music can do further damage to your hearing.

You hear a ringing or buzzing noise in your ears

- Tinnitus occurs when you hear sounds like ringing or buzzing noise in your ears when no such sound is present. Sometimes it's temporary e.g. after attending a loud concert. But ringing which doesn't fade away, without any apparent cause is a common first sign of hearing loss.

You strain to hear in noisy places - You struggle to focus on what people are saying in places with background noise, such as a restaurant or shopping centre. This can make you feel very tired.



You miss everyday sounds - If people complain you miss their calls or say they have to knock for ages before you answer the door consider it a warning sign, especially if combined with people complaining you have the TV or radio set too loud.

Whilst it can be tough to admit your hearing isn't as good as it used to be, it's best to take action early on. With the right support and technology, hearing loss doesn't need to keep you from enjoying all the fun things in life. Book an appointment with your GP or an audiologist today.



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chinese new year

February 16th - 2018 is the Chinese Year of the Dog.

Dog is the symbol of loyalty and honesty. People born in the Year of the Dog are said to be honest, friendly, faithful, loyal, smart, straightforward, and have a strong sense of responsibility.

There are twelve signs of the Chinese Zodiac: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and boar. Here is the folk tale behind them.

Long ago in China the Emperor decided to invent a way to measure time. On his birthday he gathered all the animals by a great river and told them that there would be a swimming race. The first twelve animals to cross the fast-flowing river would be declared the winners and each would be named one of the twelve signs of the zodiac.

The animals lined up along the river bank. The rat and the cat were best friends and they were worried because they were poor swimmers. So they asked the ox if he would carry them across and the kind ox agreed. He told the cat and the rat to climb on to his back then carried them across the river. They were excited to see that he was leading the race. But before he reached the bank the rat pushed the cat into the water so he could jump on to the ox's head and leap to the bank claiming first place.

The Emperor did not see the rat's dirty trick so named him the first sign of the zodiac. The poor ox was tricked into second place.

The tiger wasn't a natural swimmer but fought the current all the way across the river to arrive third. The emperor was so impressed he named the tiger the third sign.

The rabbit knew he couldn't beat the river so hopped across on some stepping stones, then jumped on to a log which carried him downstream until he was close enough to jump ashore.

'Bravo!' shouted the emperor, 'I shall call the fourth sign after you.'

Then a dragon swooped down to the shore. 'Why didn't you win the race when you can fly?' asked the emperor.

'First I needed to make some rain because the people needed water for their crops. Then I saw a little rabbit sitting on a log in the river so I blew him to shore.'

'That is kind,' said the emperor. 'You are a worthy winner of the fifth sign.'

He heard the sound of horse hooves. 'Ah the sixth sign,' said the emperor, but then a snake, which had wrapped itself around one of the horse's legs wriggled out ahead and the horse jumped back. So the snake was named the sixth sign and the horse had to be satisfied with seventh.

Then a raft arrived at the bank and a goat, a monkey and rooster climbed ashore. They explained how the rooster had found the raft, the monkey and goat had helped clear the weeds and then the goat and monkey had pushed the raft to shore. The emperor was very pleased at their co-operation and named the goat the eighth, the monkey the ninth, and the rooster the tenth sign of the zodiac.

The dog arrived in eleventh place in spite of being one of the strongest swimmers. He said he had paused to take a bath because the river was so clean.

The last animal to arrive was the boar. He had stopped for a snack then fell asleep. 'You have still done well,' said the emperor, 'The final sign of the zodiac will be named after you.'

But do you remember the poor cat? By the time he had managed to climb ashore, soaked and shivering he had missed his chance of being a winner. This made him very angry and is the reason why cats have hated rats and try to kill them ever since!

Happy Chinese New Year

the joy of a greenhouse

I am an impatient gardener. By February I am always eager to get started and my greenhouse means that I can do just that.

A greenhouse means that I don't fear the weather, I can potter in my garden all year round and I can grow a range of plants that would not survive without protection. Most gardens have room for at least a tiny greenhouse and its well worth trying to incorporate one into your space.

Before choosing a greenhouse, check whether your local planning authority places any restrictions in terms of size or position. Usually there are no problems.

Ideally a greenhouse should be placed in a bright spot because poor light and heavy shade will mean sickly spindly plants. Buy as big a greenhouse as you can accommodate because I guarantee that no matter how big it seems at first you will fill it.

You can make a greenhouse from poles and polythene but it won't last more than a couple of years



and won't be pretty to look at. Fully glazed aluminium greenhouses are good value, and if you like wood then go for western red cedar, which ages well and lasts a long time. It's important to have level foundations

You don't have to heat a greenhouse but I like to because it lets me get an early start in spring, and keeps my tender pot plants alive through the winter. When I had an unheated greenhouse my frost-tender plants rarely survived.

I prefer electric heating, which doesn't smell and doesn't produce the

excessive amounts of water vapour associated with paraffin. Make sure you use a qualified electrician and that all the sockets are rated for outdoor use. Fit a thermostat and the heat will only come on when necessary, making it very economical.

At the other end of the year make sure you have



ventilation, or your plants will cook. If you can afford it go for the automatic arms which open ventilators if the greenhouse reaches a certain temperature. Also consider blinds to help prevent sun-scorch.

I arrange my greenhouse with staging on one side and a soil bed on the other for my tomatoes to grow in, and I've attached some guttering and a downpipe to a water butt so I can collect rainwater. It's my little haven in February; where I plant seeds and imagine what my garden will look like in a three months' time.

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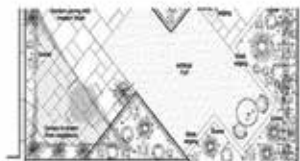
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COMPETITION



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Thursday 15th March at 8pm

The Core Theatre, Solihull (formerly Solihull Arts Complex)

For your chance to win these tickets, worth £24, visit the Core Theatre website page for this event - www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk - to find the answer to this question:

What did Metro say about David Morgan?

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

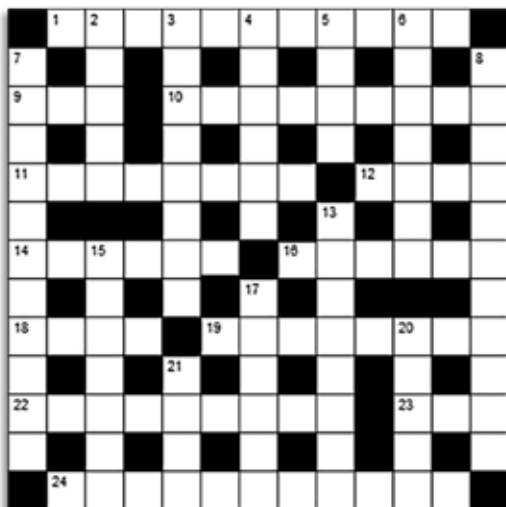
Closing date for entries is 1st March and the winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

About the Show:

A night of fantastic comedy brought to you by the producers of The Graham Norton Show featuring...
DAVID MORGAN Star of ITV2's I'm A Celebrity Get Me Out Of Here... Now! And Safeword, Solihull's very own David Morgan has also appeared on shows such as BBC3's Sweat The Small Stuff and E4's Virtually Famous and performed his own solo shows at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.

ROBIN MORGAN Robin is a Welsh stand-up comedian and writer whose debut solo show played to packed houses and critical acclaim at the 2016 Edinburgh Festival. As a writer, his credits include Have I Got News For You (BBC1), Newzoids (ITV1) and The Now Show (BBC Radio 4). Robin is also a much in demand warm up artist for some of the biggest shows on television including The Graham Norton Show (BBC1) and Blind Date (Channel 5).

crossword



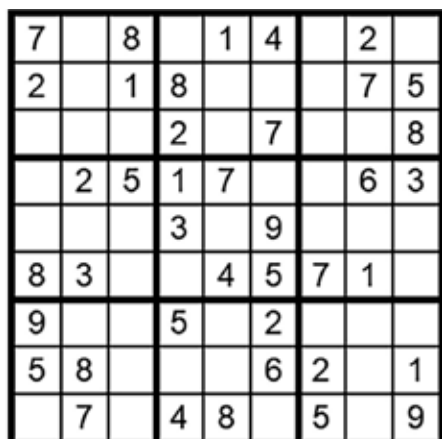
clues

Across

- 1 Place where you can stargaze indoors (11)
- 9 Member of the clergy (abbr) (3)
- 10 Seductive woman (9)
- 11 Rigidly, inflexibly (8)
- 12 Ban, prohibit (4)
- 14 Regional style of speech (6)
- 16 Oat-based breakfast food (6)
- 18 Alone (4)
- 19 Loosest fitting (8)
- 22 Came together again (9)
- 23 Sense of self-esteem / self-importance (3)
- 24 No hearing at all (slang) (4,2,1,4)

Down

- 2 Crowbar (5)
- 3 Observing, seeing (8)
- 4 Eastern place of worship (6)
- 5 Appraise, estimate (4)
- 6 Rubbish, no good (7)
- 7 Intruders, infiltrators (11)
- 8 League, club (11)
- 13 Congested (6,2)
- 15 Light perfume (7)
- 17 University grounds (6)
- 20 A bet with equal stakes on both sides (5)
- 21 Dog's bark (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 56

Accountants

46 Athos Business Solutions 0333 400 7876

Architects

7 Progression 01564 730191

Bathrooms

36 Kav's Bathrooms and Plumbing 07599 085670

Blinds / Curtains / Fabric

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18 Soft Options Mill Shop 01564 783399

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17 Parkfield Building Services 0121 241 2599

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23 Dove Home Care 0800 783 7672
24 Helping Hands 01564 454379

59 The Courtyard Nursery School 07512 107116

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29 Don Mander 01564 700 200

Central Heating / Gas Services / Boilers

29 Stephen Smith & Son 01564 200119

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40 Bright & Beautiful 01564 339967
40 Classic Carpet Cleaning 0121 682 7450
41 Dorridge & Knowle Domestic Cleaning Services 07809 567264

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10 Byte Support 0790 151 2544

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33 Central Drives Landscapes 0121 702 1456

Events

13 Nailcote Hall 02476 466174
14 The Bell at Tanworth in Arden 01564 742212
15 Land Rover Sports & Social Club 0121 742 5490

Fascias & Gutters

32 Praline 0800 956 1315

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8 Earlswood Garden & Landscape Centre 01564 702314
25 Dimension Landscape & Driveways 0121 733 1463
27 Oakland Group - lights 0121 416 0408
33 Central Drives Landscapes 0121 702 1456
51 Kenilworth Fencing 07891 046187
52 Oakland Group 0700 598 2828
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12 The Henley 01564 793715
14 The Bell at Tanworth in Arden 01564 742212

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28 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276

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16 Connect 4 Security 0344 324 6020

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

Sudoku Solution
from page 55

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

Crossword Solution
from page 55

useful numbers

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Vanilla Panna Cotta with Raspberry Sauce



Preparation time: 1-2 hours

Cooking time: 10-20 minutes

Servings: 4

For the panna cotta

3 gelatine leaves

250ml/9fl oz milk

250ml/9fl oz double cream

1 vanilla pod, split lengthways, seeds scraped out

25g/1 oz sugar

For the sauce

175g/6oz sugar

175ml/6fl oz water

Splash raspberry, cherry or blackcurrant liqueur

350g/12oz raspberries

To serve

Sprigs of fresh mint and blueberries (optional)

Method

To make the panna cotta, soak the gelatine leaves in a little cold water until soft.

Place the milk, cream, vanilla pod, scraped seeds and sugar into a heavy-bottomed pan and bring to a

simmer. Remove the vanilla pod and discard.

Squeeze the water out of the gelatine leaves, then add to the pan. Remove from the heat and stir until the gelatine has dissolved.

Divide the mixture between four pretty glass serving bowls and set aside to cool. Place into the fridge for at least an hour, until set.

To make the sauce place the sugar, water and the splash of liqueur into a pan and bring to the boil. Reduce the heat and simmer, stirring until all the sugar has dissolved.

Remove the pan from the heat and add the raspberries. Use a hand blender to blitz the sauce until smooth. Pass it through a sieve to remove the seeds. To serve, pour the sauce over the panna cotta and garnish with the blueberries and a sprig of mint. Alternative serving method - pour the panna cotta mix into oiled moulds rather than serving dishes, and set in the fridge as before. Blitz half the raspberries into the sauce and strain through the sieve, then stir in the remaining raspberries. When the panna cotta are set, dip the moulds in hot water for a few seconds and turn the panna cotta out on to a plate, spoon over the sauce and decorate with blueberries and mint.

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