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Merry Christmas

Welcome to the December edition...

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas.

Christmas will be just around the corner by the time this reaches you. So here's hoping you're all stocked up with goodies and gifts to see you through the festive season.

It can be the most wonderful time of the year, but it can also be the loneliest. If you have time why not try reaching out to any local people who live on their own to see if they'd like a cup of tea and a chat.

However you spend your Christmas, here's hoping you have a lovely time and wishing you all a happy and healthy 2026.

Zoe Reece

Tel: 07557 220585

Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com

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community events



Wicked Wizard of Oz Cirque spectacular

21-22 December

BP Pulse Live, by the NEC

Panto meets Cirque... be amazed! With a cast of 60 and spectacular aerial stunts and amazing special effects this international class arena show is the event of the year, not to be missed. Tickets from www.bppulselive.co.uk

Visit Santa at Touchwood

Until 24 December

Santa is back in residence this year at his enchanted Christmas grotto. He's eagerly waiting to receive wish lists and will even have an early gift for your little ones. Be sure to book online so the elves can reserve your space. www.eventsattouchwood.co.uk/christmas



Santa's Christmas Party

19-24 December

The Core Theatre Solihull

This is a 45 minute, interactive family show, particularly suitable for 2-8 year olds, after which the adventure continues as each child gets the chance to receive a special present from Father Christmas. Book tickets at www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Family New Year's Eve Disco

31 December

Shirley British Legion

Celebrate the New Year beginning with music, dancing, and a great family-friendly atmosphere right up until 1am! Don't miss out on the most fun way to ring in 2026 with your loved ones. Tickets from www.ticketsource.co.uk

Poker Night Experience

16 January 7.30pm

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Royal Sharks Poker is launching in Solihull. Entry is \$5 – pay on the door. All abilities welcome.



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What Foodbanks Need

The Food Foundation carried out a survey which suggested that about one in seven households across the UK experience food insecurity, meaning that they don't have reliable access to enough nutritious food.

Not all of these families will rely on foodbanks but there is no doubt that need has increased sharply over the past decade, and Christmas is a particularly brutal time for families who struggle with finances. Foodbanks often need extra help and donations.

Donations of money and food are always welcome, as is the offer to help sort, pack and transport.

An 'emergency' food parcel usually provides about three days' worth of nutritionally balanced non-perishable food. Many people assume food banks only need non-perishable food, but they also need other items and especially at this time of year they need little extras, which are often forgotten.

Basics

Tins of vegetables, meat, fish, fruit, and soup
Pasta, rice and noodles
Pasta and curry sauces
Cereal, oats



UHT / long-life milk
Tea and coffee
Biscuits and snack bars
Long-life fruit juice
Tinned beans and pulses
Jam, honey and peanut butter
Tinned custard and rice pudding
Toilet roll, soap, shampoo and toothpaste
Sanitary pads and tampons
Nappies
Baby food
Washing up liquid
Laundry detergent
Christmas extras
Christmas puddings
Mince pies

Sweets and chocolates
Tins of shortbread, biscuits
Crisps
Hot chocolate.

Check with your local foodbank what they most need. Ask if they need donations for special dietary requirements such as coeliac disease or diabetes.

And the best possible thing you can do for your local foodbank is to keep it in your thoughts when Christmas is over. Check in regularly. Foodbanks need donations throughout the year.

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don't notice what's
under your nose!)



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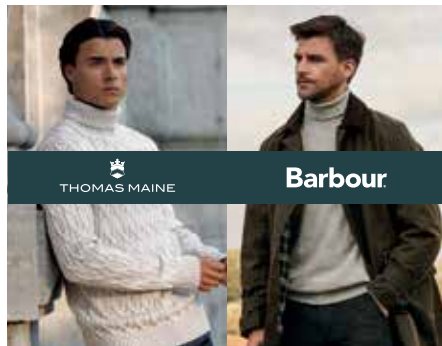
AITCHISON
Menswear

Calling all discerning gentlemen of Knowle and Dorridge

Since acquiring Aitchison Menswear two years ago,
our journey has been one of evolution, not revolution.

We've been proud to build on the trusted foundations that have made Aitchison Menswear a cornerstone of style and quality for generations. Our loyal customers remain at the heart of everything we do, and as we've introduced exciting new brands such as Barbour, Tommy Hilfinger, Loake and Thomas Maine, our focus has always been on maintaining the exceptional quality, fit, and service that Aitchison has long been renowned for.

Each addition to our collection has been carefully chosen to complement our heritage, offering fresh inspiration while staying true to our classic roots.



Many gentlemen in Knowle and Dorridge may not yet be aware
of just how much Aitchison Menswear has evolved.



This year, we've unveiled our refreshed branding and a stylish new shop front that perfectly balances tradition with modern style. And the journey doesn't stop there – next year we'll be embarking on a major refurbishment of the store to further enhance the shopping experience.

What will always remain unchanged is our dedication to personal service, expert tailoring and creating outfits for every occasion – formal, casual, and everyday. Aitchison continues to evolve, and we look forward to welcoming both familiar faces and new customers to discover what's new.

AITCHISON

Menswear

19 Station Road, Knowle, Solihull, B93 0HL

aitchisonmenswear.co.uk

 [aitchisonmenswear](https://www.instagram.com/aitchisonmenswear)

 Aitchison Menswear

a good read

By Natasha Donovan

Letters from Father Christmas

by J. R. R. Tolkien

J.R.R. Tolkien's *Letters from Father Christmas* feels like opening a keepsake trunk. Gathered from the notes Tolkien wrote to his children between 1920 and 1943, these letters arrive from the North Pole with wobbly calligraphy, postmarks, and gloriously chaotic side-comments from the accident-prone North Polar Bear. The result is a scrapbook of make-believe that somehow grows more believable with every page. There are capers involving fireworks gone wrong, goblin interlopers, and pantry raids, all rendered with gently anarchic humour. And there's wonder, with flaring auroras, moonlit ice cliffs, and marching bears 'bearing' gifts! Tolkien's illustrations and invented alphabets provide half of the magic; the other half is the voice of Father Christmas who sounds at once ancient and avuncular, and also wistful and wry; a storyteller who knows when to whisper and when to boom. Because the letters span decades, his children grow up, wars darken the winters, and merriment turns tender. The melancholy never breaks the spell though; it deepens it, the way candlelight adds depth to a room. Readers of Tolkien will recognize his hand - names that taste right, lore that feels lived-in, jokes that land. As a December ritual, a family read-aloud, or simply a tonic for grim days, this book shimmers. Open it, and you may hear sleigh bells somewhere beyond the page. It certainly leaves footprints in snow.



That Christmas

by Richard Curtis,
illustrated by
Rebecca Cobb

Five families who always spend Christmas together with set traditions and routines are all set to do it again this year.

Except the adults are off to a wedding.

Only they can't get back! So, the ten children get to do Christmas their way, and in the process make it a little bit better. It's festive chaos in picture-book form with everything going delightfully off-script in this fast-paced, funny, and fun to read aloud story.

Parents will recognise the seasonal logistics; kids will relish the anarchy and the promise that Christmas can be remade by anyone with enough imagination and a bit of courage. Rebecca Cobb's illustrations, with her loose lines and soft textures have a lively feel, and make the chaos feel safe. Her eye for tiny, domestic comedy rewards 'reading' the pictures as much as the words.

There's a clear message that tradition isn't set in stone; it's a living thing that evolves with each new generation; the best gifts can be improvised, kindness is important, and little brave silliness is always to be encouraged. It also wraps everything up with a bit of sparkle so reading *That Christmas*, with a cup of hot chocolate, may well become a festive tradition in its own right.



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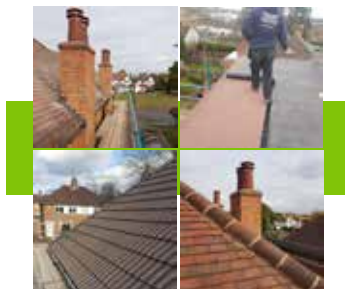


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