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Love is in the air!

Welcome to the February edition...

If you're looking to spoil your loved one for Valentine's Day then why not treat them to a night out, rather than buying yet another box of chocolates?!

Whether you fancy soul music, an Elvis tribute, or some live comedy, there's something for everyone – just check out page 6 to see what's happening in the local area. And if you're feeling flash, you could always take a trip to Boatlife Live at the NEC and treat them to a speedboat!

And if Valentine's Day will just pass you by, why not show your home some love instead? There's a wide range of local businesses and tradespeople in here who can help you improve your home, whether you need doors, driveways, or decorating...

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community events



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The show is curated to give the whole family a day out, celebrate the boating lifestyle, and bring people together. With a replica traditional river-side pub and Mediterranean bar, there will be plenty of places to meet old friends and make new ones while listening to live music and enjoying the welcoming atmosphere. Visit www.boatlifeevents.com/ for more info.

Spring Awakening

19 February

Dovehouse Theatre, Kineton

Green Road, Solihull

On Frank Wedekind's ground-breaking and controversial play (once banned in Germany), Steven Sater and Duncan Sheik's brilliant rock score and searingly emotional book take the story of sexual awakening, youth revolt, and self-discovery into a new century. Tickets from www.obsidiantheatricalproductions.com

Northern Soul Night

26 February

Knowle Royal British Legion

If you love reggae music, then you are sure to love the sounds of Northern Soul. So, grab your friends and get your dancing shoes on for another fantastic night of Northern Soul music! Tickets available from www.seetickets.com

The Real Roy 'Chubby' Brown



5 March

Land Rover Sports and Social Club

'The World's Most Outrageous Comedian' is far too rude for TV, so this live performance is the only place to catch the flamboyant comedian! Tickets from www.skiddle.com

The King, Elvis Presley Lives On 2022

9 March

Core Theatre, Solihull

Gordon Davis is one of the best Elvis tribute artists in the world after winning Images of the King in Memphis Tennessee in 2012. His spine-tingling performance brings the King to life for an entire generation of people too young to have experienced Elvis when he was alive, and for the legions of people who remember the anticipation of every new record and movie.

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To Valentine, or not to Valentine?

February 14th is Valentine's Day.

My husband and I don't celebrate Valentine's Day. There, I said it. Before you dismiss us as a couple of old cheapskate cynics, whose relationship is on the rocks, we're both in our late thirties, have been married for twelve years, we rarely argue, and we laugh a lot. We just don't feel the need to celebrate Valentine's Day.

Five years into our marriage we realised that fancy restaurants, or weekends away mean less when everyone else is there doing exactly the same thing at the same time just because it's February 14th. So, we stopped.

We do like to do something romantic during February, but to be honest we like to do something romantic at least once in every other month too. Here are our favourite ideas, not restricted to February.

We cook a meal. Not just a run of the mill, any night of the week meal. We each choose something from one of our cookbooks (main course and dessert) and we set aside an evening to create it. We arrange it around the kids' sleepovers with grandparents or friends. It's our night and we buy good wine, dress up and enjoy each other's company and the process of creating (and eating) a delicious meal.

Write a poem...or a song. My husband writes bad poetry...I'm not joking, it's terrible and stems from him insisting that poetry is not

poetry unless it rhymes! I love poetry and once joked that if he loved me he'd write me an ode. So, he did, and it was awful...but it did rhyme. Periodically he repeats the process, and the results are always hilariously bad. I stick them in a scrap book because as dire as they are, they hold a great deal of meaning for me.

Movie marathon - The Die-Hard films might not be everyone's idea of romantic film fodder, but we love them and every so often we have a day where we watch all of them back-to-back and buy in lunch and supper. Sometimes we

do the Star Wars Trilogy (four, five and six...were there any others?), or the Lord of the Rings series (extended version), or the Bourne films. The point is, it's an event. We set aside time to do it.

Recreate a date - One of my favourite dates from before we were married was when my husband took me stargazing on a clear night. He was an amateur astronomer in his teens and knew his way around the night

sky. We lay on top of his car, covered in blankets clutching binoculars while he told me stories about the constellations and encouraged me to look for shooting stars and the International Space Station (ISS)! Sometimes we recreate that, and I still get a buzz when I see the ISS moving swiftly across the sky. What favourite date could you recreate?

If you love Valentine's Day then you do you. But ask yourself, do you make Valentine plans with your partner just because that's the thing to do? If so, perhaps it's time to make a change.



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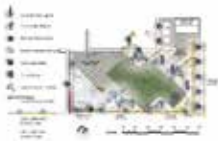
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The Winter Olympics

February 4th – 20th

The modern Olympics first took place in 1868. Five years later Sweden decided to stage the first international competition for winter sports. It was called the Nordic Game, and only Scandinavian countries competed. Like the Olympics, it was staged every four years, but it always took place in Sweden.

Then in 1908 figure skating was featured at the summer Olympics...sort of. It was actually showcased three months after the main event!

In 1911 the international Olympic Committee (IOC) proposed a separate winter competition but initially the Swedes were not keen, then the First World War forced the cancellation of all Olympic events.

In 1920, figure skating featured in the summer Olympic schedule again, and was joined by ice hockey, which proved very popular. Soon after, the Scandinavians agreed to stage an IOC-sanctioned International Winter

Sports Week in Chamonix, in the French Alps. 16 nations took part, and it was so successful that in 1925, the Winter Olympics were formally recognised as a separate international event, effectively making the competition at Chamonix the first ever Winter Olympics.

The original nine sporting events were: bobsleigh, curling, ice hockey, Nordic skiing, cross-country skiing, Nordic combined, ski jumping, and skating (both figure skating and speed skating). More events have been added over the years and today there are fifteen: Alpine skiing, biathlon, bobsleigh, cross-country skiing, curling, figure skating, freestyle

skiing, ice hockey, luge, Nordic combined, short track speed skating, speed skating, skeleton, ski jumping, and snowboarding.

An event that never made the final cut was Scandinavian skjoring. This event appeared as a demonstration in the St Moritz Winter Olympics in 1928 and involved competitors on skis clutching reins attached to a wooden harness, fitted to a horse.

Then in 1932 at the Lake Placid Winter Games, sled dog racing was showcased. I rather wish they'd kept that one in, don't you?

Of course, a Winter Olympics relies heavily on snow. In 1964 in Innsbruck, Austria, there wasn't

enough of it and the games nearly didn't go ahead! Fortunately, the Austrian army came to the rescue, transporting 20,000 blocks of ice from the mountains to the bobsled and luge track, and 40,000 cubic meters of snow to the Alpine skiing courses. Then as soon as the Winter Olympics



ended (of course) Innsbruck received one of its heaviest snowfalls for years!

Norway is the country that really punches above its weight at the Winter Olympics. It only has a population of five million (London alone has nearly nine million!) but to date has won 368 medals (132 gold, 125 silver, and 111 bronze) – way ahead of their nearest rivals, the United States, who have 305 medals and a population of 329 million!

Whether skiing, bobsleighbing or the figure skating is your winter sport of choice, pour a hot chocolate or a gluhwein and curl up under a blanket and enjoy all the action.

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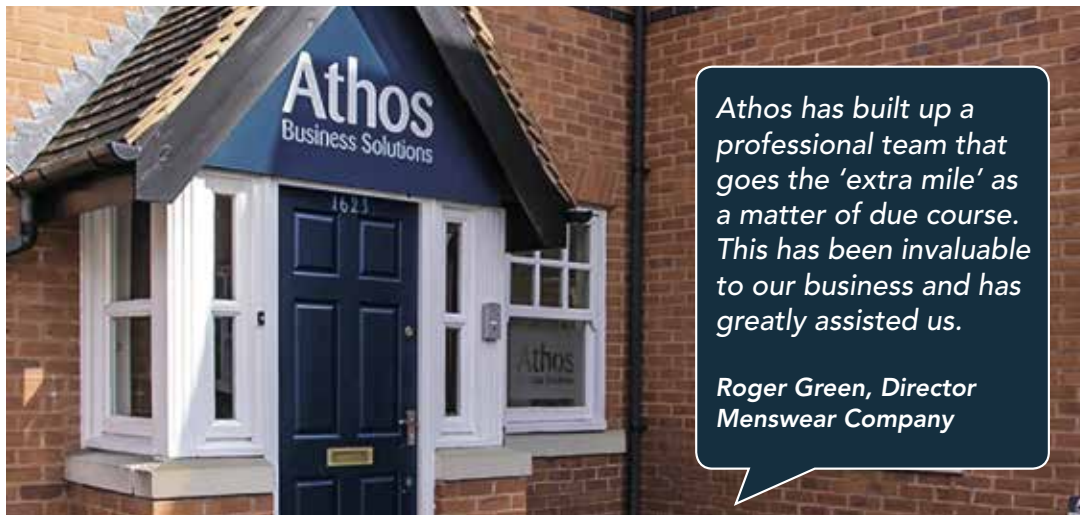
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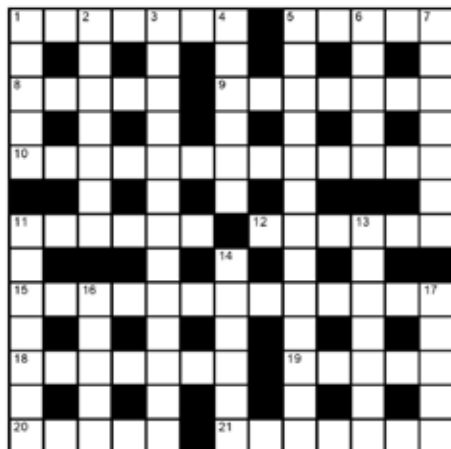
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crossword



clues

- 1 Spectacles (7)
- 5 Foot joint (5)
- 8 Apologise, redeem (5)
- 9 Die (7)
- 10 Surveying method used to calculate distance (13)
- 11 Sound reflections (6)
- 12 Petrified prehistoric remains (6)
- 15 Sweets and chocolates (13)
- 18 Heathrow or Gatwick (7)
- 19 Common blood pressure medication (5)
- 20 Layers (5)
- 21 Captures, seduces (7)

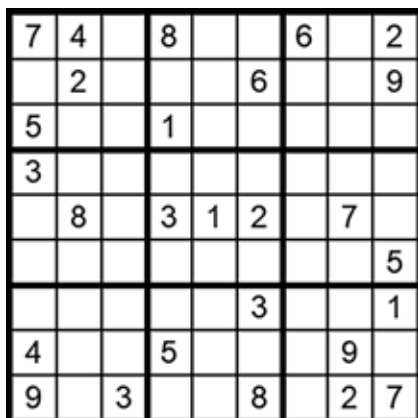
Down

- 1 Enormous, colossal (5)
- 2 Eradicate, prohibit (7)
- 3 American name for canine guides for the blind (6, 3, 4)

- 4 Element with symbol Na (6)
- 5 Person who excavates historic remains (13)
- 6 Brownish-olive (5)
- 7 Without pause, endless (7)

- 11 Bewitch, enthrall (7)
- 13 Rainbow (7)
- 14 Effigy, figure (6)
- 16 Courage, fortitude (5)
- 17 Slang name for US citizens (5)

answer on page 49



how to play sudoku

It's simple!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box, contains the numbers 1 through to 9 with no repetition. You don't need to be a genius. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive.

answer on page 49

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Hi Josh, so you're the man responsible for fitting new alarm and CCTV systems for Damar Security Systems?

Indeed I am, I head up the installation team and am usually involved in all new installations.

How many years have you been in the industry?

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How is it, working for Damar Security?

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So you're staying put at Damar?

I don't think there is a better company for me, I'm here for life, as long as they want me.

What's your life like away from work?

Well, I have a partner, Charlotte, and we are looking to buy our first home together soon. I love travel and I'm a very keen Manchester United supporter. I recently went to Old Trafford with my brother to watch them live. They won, of course!

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Do you need a Lasting Power of Attorney?

Hannah Tait, partner at Shakespeare Martineau in Solihull explains the common misconceptions of managing the medical and financial needs of loved ones.

My mum's in hospital and I need to pay her bills – why can't I access her bank account?

If a friend or family member has lost capacity due to illness or an accident, you'd expect their next of kin to automatically be able to help them with their finances and make decisions about their care – however, next of kin is not a legal term and this is not as easy as it sounds.

Can I make decisions on behalf of a family member?

Apart from in the special case of children, no individual has the ability to make decisions on behalf of another without first being legally appointed as their Attorney under a Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) or as a court-appointed Deputy. Even married couples or those in civil partnerships are unable to make decisions for their spouse or partner without these authorities in place.

What is a Lasting Power of Attorney?

Your Attorneys are nominated individuals – such as a professional, family member or friend you appoint to make decisions relating to your financial affairs as well as your personal health and welfare on your behalf, if you become unable to make those decisions yourself due to mental incapacity. Your Attorneys can step in when needed to ensure your affairs remain in good order, money can be easily accessed and to protect your assets together with articulating your personal wishes when it comes to the type of medical treatment you receive.

What is a court-appointed Deputy?

A Deputy is appointed by the Court of Protection to make decisions for someone who is unable to do so on their own. This can be a long process and is a decision made by the court, not the individual who has lost capacity. Therefore it is best to be prepared and put in place and register LPAs before mental capacity becomes a problem and the long winded Deputy route is your only option.

I have a Will – do I still need a Lasting Power of Attorney?

Yes. The Executors you identify in your Will can only make decisions concerning your Estate after you die – not while you are alive. LPAs are in effect an insurance policy against mental incapacity and ensure those who are close to you can assist you with ease and without delay.

Who should I choose to be my Attorneys?

This is ultimately up to you – but it should be someone you can trust implicitly to make decisions in your best interests; whether that be a family member, close friend or a legal professional.



For more information and support call 0330 912 7738
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To Reverse Ageing Think Blue

What are Blue Zones and what can they teach us about ageing?

As a nation we're obsessed with ageing. We try to turn the clock back with lotions, potions and sometimes Botox and fillers.

Yet some nations seem to have solved this issue without resorting to cosmetics or surgery. These people live in the world's so-called Blue Zones. The term 'Blue Zones' refers to geographic areas in which people have low rates of chronic disease including heart disease, diabetes, dementia, and several types of cancer, and enjoy life spans more than a decade longer than people elsewhere in the world. The concept of Blue Zones grew out of the work done by researchers Gianni Pes and Michel Poulain.

The five Blue Zones are:

Ikaria in Greece, Okinawa in Japan, The Ogliastra Region in Sardinia, Loma Linda in California (which boasts the highest concentration of Seventh Day Adventists in the US), and the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica.

Dan Buettner, who is an author, explorer, educator, and endurance cyclist, studied these regions intensively and concluded that the inhabitants all shared certain characteristics.

They exercise – but not at the gym, and they don't run. Instead, they live in environments that encourage movement. They walk, garden, and tend to use manual tools rather than electric ones, when working in the house and garden.

They live with purpose - The Okinawans call it *ikigai* and the Nicoyans call it *plan de vida*; both roughly translate to "why I wake up in the morning." A sense of purpose adds several years to your life span.

They take time out – Everyone, even those

living in Blue Zones experience stress. Stress is the leading cause of chronic inflammation and is associated with every major age-related disease. The Blue Zone populations understand how to deal with and diffuse that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors, Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap, and Sardinians do happy hour!

They follow the 80% rule - The Okinawan's have a 2,500-year-old Confucian mantra, 'Hara hachi bu', which they recite before meals. It reminds them to stop eating when their stomachs are 80% full. The 20% gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight and gaining it. People in

the Blue Zones eat their smallest meal in the early evening, and then they don't eat any more for the rest of the day.

They eat a plant-based diet - The people of the Blue Zones eat mainly plants and beans, limiting meat to small portions a few times per month.

They drink moderately

– Apart from the Adventists, all the people living in the Blue Zones drink alcohol regularly. Moderate drinkers actually outlive non-drinkers. So, keep to one to two glasses a day, preferably drunk with a meal and with friends or family

They have a community - The world's longest-lived people chose - or were born into - social circles that support healthy behaviours. For example, Okinawans created *moais* - groups of five friends that committed to each other for life. Research shows that smoking, obesity, happiness, and even loneliness are contagious, so healthy social networks are essential for long life.

So, if you are interested in living a longer, and healthier life...think blue!





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30 Days hath September...

"I wonder why February is the only month that has 28 days..." my teenage son mused one day. It got me thinking.

Today we use the Gregorian Calendar, a solar calendar used in the international standard for Representation of dates and times.

In Roman times though the calendar had a quite different structure. It originally consisted of 10 months rather than 12. There were 304 days in the year; six months had 30 days each and four months had 31 days each. Then the Roman king Numa Pompilius decided to bring the calendar in line with the lunar year and added January and February to the original 10 months. The king did not want months with even numbers of days though, because the Romans believed even numbers were unlucky.

To this end he subtracted a day from each of the 30-day months to make them all 29. The lunar year consists of 354.367 days, but he didn't want to round the number down to 354 because that would make the entire year unlucky, so he rounded up to 355 instead. Now he had six months with 29 days and 4 months with 31 days, giving 298 days, and leaving 57 extra days to be divided between the two new months. Mathematics dictated that one of the months would have to have an even number of days because the sum of any even amount (12 months in this case) of odd numbers will always equal an even number - and he needed the total to be odd. So, the king chose February as the unlucky month.

And the answer to my son's question? February has 28 days because of superstitious Romans!

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55g unsalted butter

Filling

225g plain chocolate (at least 70%), broken into pieces.

225g good quality milk

chocolate (at least 45%)

broken into pieces

55g golden caster sugar

350g cream cheese

425ml double cream, lightly whipped (this means that it's no longer liquid, has increased in volume and just holds its shape when the whisk is removed).

3tbsp coffee cream liqueur

Method

Line the base of a 20cm springform round cake tin with greaseproof paper and brush the sides with oil. Place the chocolate chip cookies in a polythene bag and crush them with a rolling pin. Melt the butter in a saucepan over a low heat then add the crushed cookies. Press the resulting mixture into the base of the prepared tin, and chill in the fridge for 1 hour. Place the broken plain and milk chocolate into a heatproof

bowl over a pan of simmering water until the chocolate melts. Set aside to cool. Place the sugar and cream cheese into a mixing bowl and beat together until smooth. Fold in the whipped cream, then the melted chocolate, and finally the coffee cream liqueur. Spoon the mixture into the cake tin on top of the biscuit base.

Smooth the surface and place in the fridge to chill for two hours. When it's firm transfer to a serving plate and drizzle with more melted dark chocolate if required.

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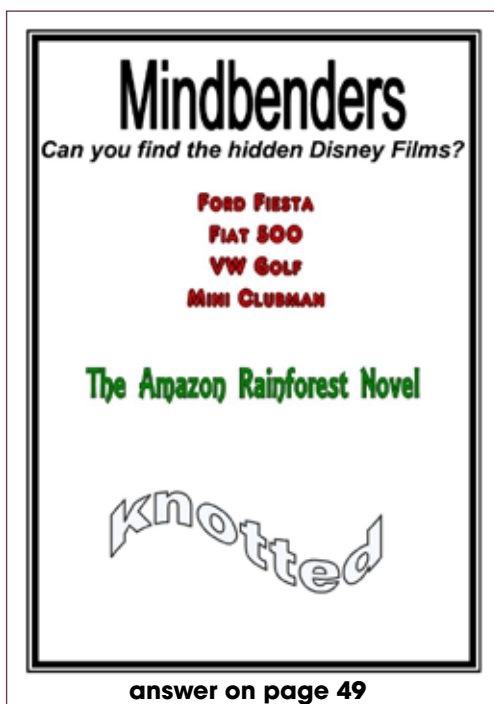
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answer on page 49



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Contain your excitement

For me February marks the real beginning of the gardener's year. Seed sowing starts in earnest, and we can begin to plan to bring the patio pots alive. As a gardener I do raise a lot of my plants from seeds in cold frames and greenhouses. But there is no right way to approach this. If you're super busy and time in the garden is short, wait until late February and purchase fresh, well grown young plants from the garden centre. Yes its more expensive but it might be worth it in time and energy saved.

The patio is a great place to indulge your creativity. Do you want a brilliant chaotic colour palate or a cool tranquil colour scheme, or maybe even monochrome calming greens in many textures of foliage. I think of patio pots like soft furnishings in the house...changing things up can transform the mood.

While containers are conventionally planted in autumn and late spring, they can actually be planted at any time of year, and I like to get a couple planted up in February so they can become really established and give me a running start.

I use containers of all sizes but generally the large ones provide more impact. If they are too large and heavy to move easily, plant them with hardy bulbs or permanent shrubs or trees. You can then add seasonal geraniums

and pansies etc around the core planting. Small, moveable containers can be planted with bright bulbs and specimen plants that can be brought to the front as they reach their peak with flowers or foliage. If you have a sheltered frost-free area for a cold frame or poly cover you can plant early, keep safe from the worst of the winter weather, and then bring them out when the frosts have finished.



Good trees for larger containers are conifers. There is such a huge variety of shapes and colours to choose from. For patios its best to choose more compact, well-groomed shapes in bright greens or yellows. Groups of three or five pots containing contrasting shapes and colours work very well together. Alternatively go for similar shapes in a variety of sizes and colours.

Because February tends to be quite wet drainage can be an issue. As a guide, patio and decking surfaces should be dry, or only wet if it's rained recently. If a patio or decking is constantly wet it's likely that algae and moss will start to grow which can look unsightly and make the surface dangerously slippery to walk on. Use a strong yard brush and approved detergent to keep hard surfaces clean and safe.

As anticipation in gardening provides much of the pleasure take the garden furniture out of storage this month and clean it up...then you can enjoy a cup of tea on sunny days and watch your patio begin to wake up.



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43 Knowle BOB Club 07490 645665

Car Services

14 Chips Away 07479 250 200

40 AP Alloys 07972 852758

41 Crossroads Service Station 01564 703225

Care services

13 Home Instead 01564 330395

15 Belmont @ Home Care 0333 444 0121

17 Lady Katherine Housing & Care 01564 772850

35 Eastcote Park 01564 757237

Carpets & Flooring

51 D.A. Mander & Son 01564 700200

Cleaning Services

33 SolClean 0121 369 0070

39 Dorrige & Knowle Domestic Cleaning Services 07809 567264

Doors & Windows

18 Garolla garage doors 0121 369 0774

25 Clearly Better Windows 0800 048 5223

39 ACS Doors 07592 303104

Events

29 Nailcote Hall 024 7646 6174

Funeral Directors

1 Bastock & Bruce 01564 335577

Gardens and drives

10 Oakland Group 01564 758608

12 Solihull Tree Care 0121 604 6809

20 Ashley Sayers Tree Services 07740 546745

21 Hodges & Lawrence 01564 823049

31 Healy Fencing & Landscaping 07599 612399

37 Dimension Landscape & Driveways 0121 733 1463

47 Central Drives Landscapes 0121 702 1456

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22 Hot Lobster Design Ltd 0121 369 1977

Health & Wellbeing

8 Physio and Health Matters 01564 660557

25 Equanimity CBT 0844 693 1282

30 MUMS 0121 704 2669

45 Central England Pilates 07762 311074

Heating

7 Stephen Smith Plumbing & Heating 01564 200119

Kitchens & Bathrooms

2 Dream Doors 0121 744 8974

5 No. 31 Kitchens 01564 770587

11 Cullen Plumbing & Tiling 07896 862916

Languages

18 Beech Languages 01564 739621

Locksmiths

14 Lockfit 01564 627020

Lofts

41 Stu's Loft Ladders 07712 327889

Painter & Decorator21 Bill Boyce
0121 744 0040**Plumbing**

3 Knowle Domestic Appliance Repairs 01564 730183

7 Stephen Smith Plumbing & Heating 01564 200119

11 Cullen Plumbing & Tiling 07896 862916

45 DMC Plumbing 07792 296728

Restaurants

19 Café Tamarinds 01676 533308

Roofing

13 Deluxe Roofing 0800 747 1461

34 C Stevens Roofing 0121 733 1276

52 N. Bird & Son 0121 743 6324

Security

26-27 Damar Security Systems 0121 706 8666

Shopping

36 The Ironmongers 0121 643 4900

36 Enfield Sports 0121 716 1410

Solicitors

28 Shakespeare Martineau 0121 705 8151

Sports

8 SoccerPots www.soccerpots.co.uk

36 Enfield Sports 0121 716 1410

Tiling

11 Cullen Plumbing & Tiling 07896 862916

Travel Agent

45 Not Just Travel 07565 534524

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

Sudoku Solution

from page 24

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

crossword Solution

from page 24

**Solution to Mind benders**

1. Cars
2. Jungle Book
3. Tangled

mindbenders

from page 45

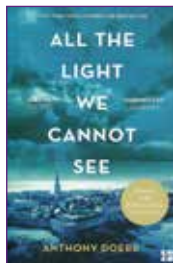
a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

All the Light We Cannot See

By Anthony Doerr

Marie-Laure is blind. She lives in Paris near the Museum of Natural History, where her father works. When she is twelve, the Nazis occupy Paris forcing father and daughter to flee to the home of Marie-Laure's reclusive great uncle, carrying what might be the museum's most valuable and dangerous jewel. Werner Pfenning, is an orphan, growing up in a mining town with his younger sister, learning about the world through a crude radio they find. Werner's expertise in fixing radios makes him a valuable asset to the Nazis as they track down the resistance. Doerr deftly interweaves the lives of these two youngsters, and along the way shows us how against all the odds, people mostly do try to be good to one another. This book is built on beautiful imagery. Both in the literal sense - vividly evoking 1940s Paris and Germany - and the metaphorical as it's woven through with scientific and philosophical references to light, to seeing and not seeing, and the differences between the two. It's the beautiful and harrowing story of two childhoods torn apart by war. We learn how Mari-Laure and Werner are both forced along paths they did not choose due to their desperate personal circumstances. There is a running theme of interconnectedness, of invisible lives running parallel to one another yet sometimes coming together in the strangest of ways. Marie-Laure and Werner are from different worlds, yet each influences the other. All the Light We Cannot See is a haunting novel. The elegant prose and engaging, heart-breaking stories will remain with you long after you've reached the final page. The title hints at the fact that just as we only see a small part of the electromagnetic spectrum, so we are

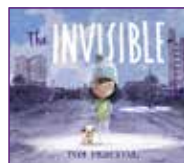


only ever aware of a fraction of the spectrum of history. But if we could look deeper, we'd see the untold stories and they would be beautiful and strangely luminescent in their own right.

The Invisible

By Tom Percival

This is another book about untold stories and human connections. Tom Percival has blended gorgeous illustrations with his simple, clear prose in this picture book which is perfect for bedtime reading. Isabel is a happy child whose parents love her and each other but the family is struggling financially. They slip through society's cracks and descend into poverty. Isabel discovers that poverty brings a cloak of invisibility. No-one seems to see her, though she can see more than ever before. She begins to notice the other invisible members of society, and she begins to understand that alongside invisibility poverty brings something else...loneliness. Isabel decides that she will do something to tackle the problem. The book has modern social themes, but rather than being unrelentingly grim, or alternatively, ridiculously upbeat and positive, Percival uses his light touch to show us the humanity and love that exist between people everywhere in society, and how we can all make a difference, whoever we are. The beautiful, heart-warming ending doesn't rely on a lottery win, or a fairy godmother but on Isabel herself showing the way. The author has drawn on his own experiences growing up in poverty to create a gentle and thought-provoking window into a world that for many of us goes entirely unnoticed. This is another book that will stay with you and one which children will delight in hearing again because it has the magic of a fairy tale with none of the schmalz.



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