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Joyous June!

Welcome to the June edition...

I'm delighted to have been able to put together an events page for the Knowle & Dorridge Directory, finally! After months of not being to do anything, we can all now start making plans and going places!

So check out the local events section on page 6 – there's lots of great things planned in Solihull over the next 4 weeks so it's a great opportunity to support the local community and get out and about once more.

And if you fancy venturing slightly further afield, Alfresco Style at Hatton Country World are kindly offering a £5 discount when you spend £20 or more in their lovely garden centre – see page 19.

However you spend your leisure time, I hope you have a marvellous month.



Zoe Reece Tel: 07557 220585 Email: zoe@dorridgedirectory.com www.knowleanddorridgedirectory.com



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local events

community events

Wimbledon Big Screen in Solihull

5-11 July Mell Sauare Solihull

The large screen, located in Mell Square, will show the final week of the Wimbledon tennis championships as the tournament reaches its thrilling conclusion. There will be deckchairs and benches available so you can sit back, relax and get into the Wimbledon spirit right here in Solihull



Welcome back to Solihull Party

15 July Solihull Town Centre

You'll be able enjoy a range of food and drink from the Continental Food & Drink Market and then sit back and relax with some live music on the main stage in Mell Square. Rats In The Kitchen, the World's number one UB40 tribute band, will be performing live.



Outdoor Tabletop Sale

17 July 10am – 1pm Knowle Village Hall Forecourt

The Knowle Village Hall Association invites you to visit our Outdoor Sale (Weather and Covid regulations allowing) and find a bargain. All proceeds to the Knowle Village Hall Refurbishment Fund.

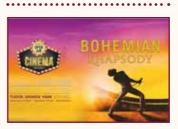
Solihull 'Sort Of' Jazz Festival

16-18 July Solihull Town Centre

The main stage in Mell Square and a number of venues across



Solihull town centre will be hosting music across the weekend with a Continental Food & Drink Market accompanying the tunes.



Open Air Cinema Bohemian Rhapsody

23 July, 5.30pm – 10.30pm Tudor Grange Park

Following the film there will be a LIVE performance by Killer Queen. Food vendors and fully licensed bars will be available. Adults £10, children £7.50. To book please visit tkt. to/bohemianrhapsody

Meet The HR Dept

Hello, my name is Erica Burke and I run **The HR Dept Solihull** providing fully outsourced HR services to SMEs in the Solihull area. Our services cover everything to do with employing people and will help you prevent people problems or resolve problems when they arise. This can be for a 'one-off' issue or you can join us on a yearly retained basis. Use us for as much or as little as you like.



What makes The HR Dept different?

I am like you, a small business based in Solihull passionate about helping local business owners thrive. I offer pragmatic and personal advice which is tailored to you and your business, so you won't need to explain who you are or what you are trying to do, over and over again.

How can I help?

I can help with recruitment to redundancy and everything in between, but let's start from the beginning, contracts and handbooks.

When was the last time you checked whether they were up to date and reflect the current situation? There were a lot of employment law changes last year, and if you are bringing people back to work, either in the same way or in a new way of working, your documents will need to reflect everything that's changed. It may be time for a Spring clean of your HR documents.

Don't forget, these documents underpin your whole employment relationship and are the 'go-to' place if things go wrong. So, make sure they're right!

Contact me for a FREE review of your contracts and handbooks. You can also visit my website to access some free resources and sign up to my monthly People Matter newsletter.

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Is Laughter the Best Medicine? It certainly seems to help.

t feels so good to laugh doesn't it. Especially at the moment, after more than a year of social restrictions, closed pubs, theatres, and comedy clubs. On of the things I've missed the most during lockdown is communal laughter. It connects people. From a tiny titter to a great guffaw, laughter can completely change the temperature of a room.

Scientists are fascinated by laughter. Researchers at the Loma Linda University in California have been researching the health benefits of laughter and made some interesting discoveries.

Laughter lowers blood pressure – and lower blood pressure means a reduced risk of stroke and heart attack.

It reduces stress hormone levels – laughter makes us feel less anxious and stressed, which reduces the negative impact of these emotions on our body, while simultaneously increasing the health of our immune system.

It helps tone your abs – Ok, it's not going to replace your tums, bums, and thighs class but when you laugh the muscles in your stomach contract and relax, similar to when you intentionally exercise them. That can only be a good thing, right?

It increases cardio activity - Laughter gets your heart pumping and burns a similar number of calories per hour as walking at a slow to moderate pace. Who knew?

It increases our sense of wellbeing. Doctors have found that people who have a positive outlook on life tend to fight off diseases better than people with a more negative outlook. The reason for this may be that it boosts T-cells, which are the specialist immune system cells. Laughter activates T-cells, so happy people who laugh frequently are probably less vulnerable to infection!



It triggers the release of endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers, so laughter can help relieve chronic pain.

Did you know that we are 30 times more likely to laugh when in a group than when we're alone? Or that that four-year-olds laugh 300 times a day but 40-year-olds only 300 times every 10 weeks! This is probably due to a number of factors, including the belief that adulthood and work is 'serious', but also because we worry about offending, about the joke falling flat, and about just not being funny. We become scared to be silly. No one is suggesting that you suddenly start telling off-colour mother-in-law jokes, but a little levity can lighten everyone's day, whether it's a shared snigger with a colleague over a one of your boss's foibles, or a funny anecdote about your dog shared with a friend.

During last year's lockdown with the shift to remote working, incidence of loneliness and depression has increased dramatically. Many of us have felt disconnected, so when we laugh with someone – even through a screen or 2m apart – we generate a cocktail of hormones that strengthens our emotional bonds, our wellbeing and our immune system in a way that wouldn't otherwise be possible.

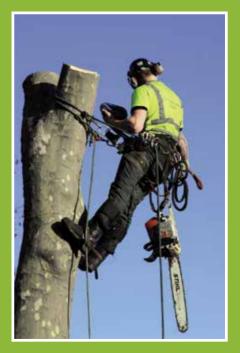


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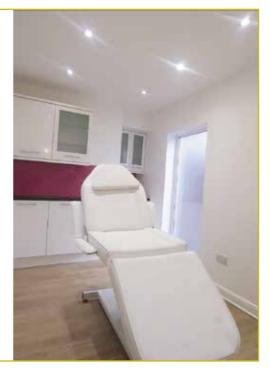
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Fun at Fountains!

At Fountains Care Home in Solihull you'll find more than just bespoke care, from art and fitness classes to virtual performances and events, we make every day stimulating and fun, and our talented chefs create healthy, nutritious menus for sociable mealtimes. We also offer a choice of visiting options, from indoor visits to garden visits when the weather allows.

ur staff receive specialist training across a range of different skills, including specialist dementia care, giving you the reassurance your loved one will receive high-quality care and be supported by our friendly team of experts.

Fountains Care Home is part of Barchester Healthcare - one of the UK's leading care providers with over 25 years' experience and award winning health and safety. Currently rated 10/10 on CHUK, why not call us to arrange a visit to see what our home has to offer and how we can help. These are just some of our recent activity at Fountains.

The Joy of Live Music!

For our celebrations of VE Day fountains residents and staff enjoyed a day filled with music, fun and dancing. With restrictions easing Fountains welcomed back garden performances and were delighted to have





'Ruby Ann Sings' here to perform for them. Ruby filled the home with her beautiful voice and sang songs from the 1940's with a sprinkling of rock 'n' roll and classics from the 50's too. Residents had a wonderful time and the sound of lived music filled fountains with joy.

Families reunite in the Sunshine!

Fountains residents and staff are delighted to welcome families back to our gardens for outdoor visits. Families and residents have loved making the most of the glorious sunshine whilst catching up.



Visit the website for more information https://www.barchester.com/ home/fountains-care-home/ or call directly on 0121 5148360.

Visit our Facebook page to keep up to date with events and activity stories at https://m.facebook. com/BarchesterFountains

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Check plants daily and water them if the soil is dry – especially newly planted fruit trees and shrubs that are still getting established. Keep on top of weeding. Your plants shouldn't have to compete for precious water, light, and nutrients.

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useful services

Care Homes How to choose the right one

are of the elderly is an emotive subject, and has become even more so during the pandemic. Whether you are choosing a care home for yourself, or searching on behalf of an elderly relative, you want to make sure you get it right.

First you need to decide on the level of care required.

Residential homes are for people who can no longer cope with daily activities in their home. They may also need help washing, bathing, dressing and going to the toilet. Nursing homes are for those people who require regular nursing care, by or under the supervision of a qualified nurse. Residents tend to have no mobility or severely limited mobility, mental confusion, and may be faecally incontinent.

As with any home, location is important. You may want to choose a place where family or friends can visit regularly?

Once a location has been decided on, select as many care homes as you can and visit every one of them. The Care Quality Commission (www.cqc.org.uk) have over 18000 care homes registered with them and publish all their inspection reports online, so this is a good place to start. Two other excellent sources of information are the websites www.yourcarehome.co.uk and www.carehomesupport.co.uk.

Groundwork is good, but there is no substitute for visiting and assessing the standard of service yourself. This is harder at the moment but that option should still be offered, even with all the restrictions in place. Begin your inspection by ringing to arrange appointments to visit the premises. Ask yourself if the phone



was answered in a friendly way. Did the person answering the phone sound stressed or abrupt?

When you visit, what are your first impressions? Is the place bright and clean, comfortable, welcoming and airy? Did the receptionist make eye contact and smile? Were you offered a cup of tea while you waited?

What are the noise levels like? Are there any unpleasant odours? Look at the residents and chat to them if you have an opportunity. Do they look clean, well-cared for and happy?

Monitor how much interaction there is between the staff and the residents. Is there lots of friendly chatter? Check to see if call lights over doors are on and being left unanswered. This might indicate staffing problems.

Check the floor, especially in corners and under beds. This is a good indicator of whether standards of hygiene and care are high throughout.

When you've reached a decision, take good financial and legal advice. What are the fees and what do they include? Can you afford them on a long-term basis? What happens if funds dry up? What is the protocol for making a complaint? Consult the Office of Fair Trading 'Fair Terms for Care' booklet to see whether the contract you'll be asked to sign is a fair one.

Ask as many questions as you can up front, and you will help ensure that any move you or your elderly relative makes will be the right one.

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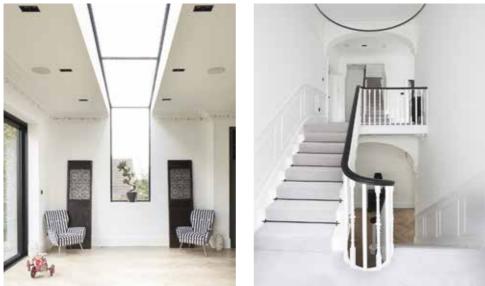
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book reviews

a good read

The Midnight Library by Matt Haig

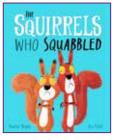
We all experience both good and bad in our lives. Some people seem pretty content with their lot in spite of adversity, and some are dissatisfied even when others feel they've been dealt a good hand. At some point all of us have wondered, what if? What if things were different?



Nora certainly does. She's in her 20s yet feels trapped. As a teenager she was destined to become an Olympic swimmer, but gave it up, went to university to study philosophy, and ended up working in a local music shop, living alone with her cat. Nora's life seems to be going from bad to worse, so she decides to not go on living at all, and one night, just before midnight, she takes an overdose and writes a goodbye note. Suddenly she finds herself in a library; an infinite library where the time is always 00:00 - the Midnight Library. There she meets Mrs Elm, her old school librarian, who explains that this is where she can decide whether or not to live. But she doesn't have to live her current life: she can live ANY possible life that she could ever have had. Every rearet that she ever had has led to another version of her living that life in another possible existence. She now has the chance to decide if she would like to live one of those lives. The Midnight Library draws on classical philosophical ideas, and this thoughtprovoking novel will lead you to question what happiness is really all about. Will Nora decide to live and if so, which life will she choose?

The Squirrels who Squabbled by Jim Field

This picture book was loaned to me by the fouryear-old son of a friend, who said it was his favourite book and I should review it – and I can see why. It is autumn and all through the forest creatures are busy storing up the food they need for the winter.



All that is except one squirrel: Spontaneous Cyril. As usual, he doesn't bother with that. He imagines he can grab some food at the last minute. Then the last minute arrives and he spies a fat pinecone, full of lovely nuts. It is just what he needs, and he sets off to acquire it. But he isn't the only one eyeing it up. Plan-Ahead Bruce has also seen it. His store is getting on nicely and this is the perfect pinecone to finish it off. Who will get to it first?

With wonderful illustrations and text to match it, this book teaches the value of teamwork to young readers.



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The summer fevourite

Eton Mess

Ingredients

For the meringues (or you can use good quality shop-bought meringue nests) 175g caster sugar 1 thick lemon slice 3 egg whites, at room temperature 1 pinch salt

To assemble the mess

500g ripe strawberries 50g caster sugar 450ml double cream 1 tbsp icing sugar 1 tsp vanilla paste Mint for garnish

Method

Meringues

Preheat the oven to 220C / gas 7. Line a baking tray and pour the sugar on to it then bake in the oven until it just begins to melt at the edges. Rub the inside of the mixing bowl with the lemon (this gets rid of any grease) and add the egg whites. Just before its time to take the sugar out of the oven, start whisking the whites at high speed. Carefully tip the hot sugar and the salt into the fluffy foamy whites. Continue whisking until the mixture is cool, glossy and forms soft peaks. Lower the heat in the oven to 130C / gas ½. Heap dollops of meringue on to lined baking trays, making sure they are well spaced. Bake in the cool oven for about two and a half hours. Check after two hours. The outsides should be crisp and golden but not burned! Turn off the oven and leave the meringues inside to cool completely.

The mess

To prepare the strawberries: wash and hull the fruit, and slice into half or auarters. Aim for bite-size pieces. Place the strawberries in a bowl, sprinkle with the caster sugar, making sure all the strawberries are coated. Place in the fridge for half an hour until the fruit goes squidgy and leaks juices. Set a third of the strawberry mixture on one side for later. Using a potato masher lightly crush the rest into a chunky puree. Pour the double cream into a big bowl (it's best if the bowl is cold). Sift in the icing sugar and the teaspoon of vanilla paste (not essence) and whip to soft peaks. Roughly squash and break six of the meringues. Fold the pieces and the crushed strawberries into the whipped cream. Don't mix too thoroughly. The red and white should be clearly distinct. I tend to leave mine in a big serving dish so people can help themselves, but it looks lovely spooned into tall glasses and topped with a sprig of mint.

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id you know that there are around 240 cruises taking place between now and the end of September around the UK?

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What if you've never cruised before, don't worry you can try a taster cruise of 3 nights.

I know there are lots of you looking for a nice warm holiday soaking up the sun. What if you could go on a week-long cruise and the captain just searched for the best weather each day. Sailing in European waters there will be no shortage of warm sunshine for you to sit by the pool on deck or relaxing on your balcony with a cocktail or two before dinner. So yes! There are cruises just for the sun lovers like myself to relax the days away.

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The Garden Goddess

ris was the goddess of the rainbow in Greek mythology. I have a thing for Greek mythology, and I love Irises. The larae, bearded types unfurl at this time of year and they reflect the colours of the spectrum from deepest purple, through dusky orange, egg-yolk yellow and the most delicate of blues, to the brightest of whites. They comprise of standard petals, which are carried aloft over the araceful fall petals, which arch downwards.



From the upper bases of the falls grow groups of fuzzy hairs called beards and from this the bearded Iris gets her name. Even the foliage is attractive: large pale green swords that shoot straight upwards from the earth.

Bearded Irises love full sun and prefer to have their fleshy rhizomes (the underground stems) near the soil surface so they can take full advantage of the sun's warmth. They actually prefer a more impoverished soil, so if your soil is a bit thin and dry they may be perfect for your garden.

As the clumps become overcrowded the centres die out. Dig them up immediately after flowering and chop them into single healthy rhizomes, each with a fan of leaves. Shorten each fan with scissors by about half, then replant about 30cm apart in another sunny spot so that the rhizomes are just visible under the surface. Although they like drier conditions make sure they are watered in and looked after for a few weeks until established. But really you don't need to do much to them. Overly enriched soil is not a friend to the iris, which might decline to flower in such conditions. My best flowering plants are in the driest, most sun-baked part of my plot!

But for those who have shadier gardens and boggier conditions try the non-bearded Iris sibirica. I have one in a sun-dappled spot by a water feature. Its leaves are greener and grassier, which complements the water, and it has lovely rich blue flowers which look particularly nice in the shade. I also like Iris ensata, which I plant by my pool at the water's edge. It's also a good choice in borders if you garden on richer soil than mine.

So, invoke the power of the Goddess Iris in your garden, and enjoy the rainbow of colour. Happy gardening.

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Choose the Right Laptop for School or University

o, you need a new laptop. With thousands to choose from, and a thick cloud of jargon to wade through, where do you start? First, make a list of what you will use the machine for. All laptops will let you browse the web, type essays, and watch videos. Do you need to run some specialist software? If you're studying a programming course, graphic design, or photography for example, you'll probably need a more powerful laptop. Gaming requires the most computer power so, if you want to run the latest games at full speed you'll need to increase your budget accordingly.

Next, you need to consider how you're going to use the laptop. If you mostly use it at home at a desk, the laptop doesn't need to be as portable. You can go for larger sizes and less battery life. If you need it in lessons throughout the day away from a power socket, consider a more compact design with a whole-day battery life. 2-in-1 laptops allow you to you unplug the keyboard and use the laptop as a tablet for even more convenience.

Your budget will be dictated by the first two steps: the more features you need the more you'll need to budget. For a basic, general-purpose laptop expect to pay about £400. If you need to run some specialist software look in the £400 to £800 bracket.

Whatever laptop you decide on there are a few basic specifications you need to check.

How fast your laptop can perform tasks is controlled by the microprocessor and memory. The faster your processor and the more memory you have, the more responsive your laptop will be. In general, bigger numbers mean more power. As a minimum for your processor, I would advise an Intel i3 or any of the Ryzen devices. For memory (RAM) you need at least 4 GB, 8 GB or more if you can afford it. Apple



laptops do their own thing beyond the scope of this article, but the premise is the same.

Hard disks are where you store all of your information and programs. Most laptops use solid-state drives which are faster and use less battery than mechanical drives. If you're only using your laptop for web browsing and writing essays, a 128 GB hard drive will probably be okay. If you want to use your laptop for anything more go for at least 256 GB or you'll quickly run out of hard drive space.

Once you get past the basic requirements it's down to personal choice. If you can get to a computer shop try a few out. Make sure the keyboard and touchpad feel right for you. Check that the screen is clear and bright enough for you to easily read it. Make sure the size is either big enough for you to use the programs you need, or small enough to make it easily portable.

One of the great things about computers is that techy people love to write reviews about them. Check the web for more advice, and check reviews for any laptop you're thinking of buying.

Paying more will always get you a more powerful laptop. But that extra power is only useful if you're going to use it! My rough guide to laptop happiness - find the specification that meets your needs, then buy the model above that it if you can afford it.



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crossword

1	2		3	4			5	6	7	
						8				
9										
10								11		
		12		13						
	14								15	
16				17		18				
19			20							
21					22					

Down

- 2 In pain, hurting (6)
- 3 Source of illumination (5,4)
- 4 Cider With _____, novel by Laurie Lee (5)
- 6 Casual hat (3)

- 7 Slang for sausage (6)
- 8 Cloth, textile (6)
- Large flightless birds
 (9)
- 13 Imprison (4,2)

clues

Across

- Exhibit hall, studio (7)
- 5 An aqualung (5)
- 9 Uproariously funny (5-8)
- 10 Sweaters and cardigans (8)
- 11 Conform, comply (4)
- 12 Advertising (9)
- 16 Butt, remnant (4)
- 17 Crashed (8)
- 19 A pirate might bury one! (8,5)
- 21 Brownish green (5)
- 22 Pursuing (7)
 - 14 Complex carbohydrate (6)
 - 15 English naval hero (6)
 - Blood-sucking worm
 (5)
 - 20 Biblical ship built by Noah (3)

answer on page 49

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

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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Suduko Solution from page 45



crossword Solution from page 45

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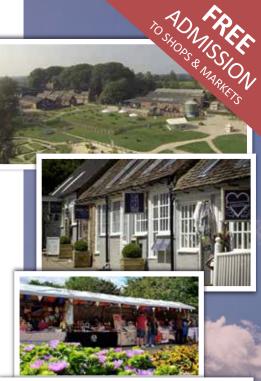
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