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a community magazine and business directory
for residents of knowle and dorridge

march 2022



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Welcome to the March edition...

It's a great time of year to start thinking about your next house move, or having a Spring clean, or maybe getting around to those home and garden improvements you've been putting off and off...

We have a wide range of organisations and tradespeople who advertise in here who are all local and keen to take on more work in the area.

Don't forget Mothers' Day on Sunday 27th March – even if you don't take her out for a slap-up meal you can tell her how much she means to you!

Zoe

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contents

24 Puzzles

53 Index

42 Competition

54 Book reviews

48 Recipe

52 Useful telephone numbers

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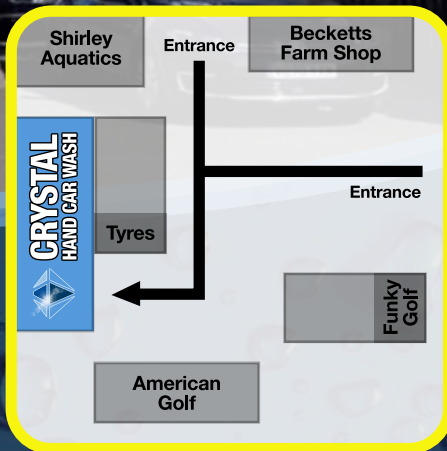


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community events

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19 March

Balsall Common Comedy Club, St Peters Church Hall

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Back to the 80's Disco Night

26 March

Knowle Royal British Legion

This was undoubtedly a decade of unbelievable and unforgettable music. The 80's brought us classics from the likes of George Michael, Culture Club, Rolling Stones and Queen to name but a few. Come and join our fantastic DJ and be a part of selecting the playlist for the evening. For a night that promises to take you back to the greatest era in modern day music. Tickets available from www.seetickets.com

Planet Earth Live in Concert

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The Strolling Players present "SHOWTIME"

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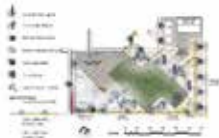
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So, You Want to Change Career

As we emerge blinking into the (almost) post-pandemic world of work, many of us are finding that we've changed as people, which is not surprising, and our job no longer seems like such a good fit for us.

Changing career is a decision which can't be made lightly, and the prospect can be daunting, but sometimes it can be best way forward.

The first thing you need to ask is 'What's my why?' Why do I want to change? Do you want more money? Or maybe you'd like more flexible hours and less stress. You might dream of running your own business or turning your hobby into your career.

The next thing to ask is 'When?' When is the right time?

It's probably the right time to consider a career change (or at least a job change) if your workplace

is toxic and grinding you down. Toxic workplaces impact on your mental and physical health and are rarely worth the pay cheque long term. It's also time to re-evaluate if you're only in it for the money. A career change might give you the chance to find more personal and professional satisfaction but still pay all the bills. If you get a sick feeling in the pit of your stomach every Sunday evening, it could be a good time to consider a change. Likewise, if you're bored all the time and feel like you're sleepwalking towards retirement, it's a good sign that you might benefit from a change.

Various surveys have been carried out on career-changers. And overwhelmingly the responses are mostly positive. Respondents reported feeling happier, more fulfilled, and less stressed. Around 80% of people

who have changed careers say that they wish they had done it sooner. Very few of them regretted their decision.

Of those that did have regrets the main one was financial insecurity. Changing careers can incur costs such as having to pay for further education or an initial drop in salary.

Even those who were mostly happy with their decision cautioned that it can take time to find the right position in a new career. Those who had started their own business explained that the emotional and financial stakes are higher day-to-day, which can lead to its own stress.

If you still feel you'd like to change career the next question is 'What?' What would you like to do?

Research is key. The more research you do, the better position you'll be in to make the right decision. Set a time limit on your research so you don't

get stuck in 'analysis paralysis.'

Then start at the end point e.g. 'I want to become a hairdresser / plumber / chartered accountant' and work backwards, breaking down what you have to do to achieve each step. Then aim to take a small action towards your big goal every day. For example, contacting someone who already works in the industry; contacting a careers adviser; signing up for a course.

For many people, their biggest obstacle is inertia. They want to change but they're scared or overwhelmed or worried about what others might think. So, take the time to go through the above process step-by-step manner to help to clarify things in your mind. When you feel confident, other people are more likely to be supportive.



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Being a mother is fabulous, and funny, and frightening. It's the best and worst of jobs. There are cuddles and giggles, sports days and parents' evenings, Nativities, and music recitals... there are also blazing rows with slammed doors, sleepless nights and more vomit than you ever realised one small human could produce.

Mums are multi-tasking maestros. Carer, teacher, agony aunt, tour guide, drill sergeant, PA, and chauffeur... Even when they leave home it doesn't stop. I still rely on my mother for advice, help with childcare, and a shoulder to cry on when things go pear-shaped.

It's only now as with children of my own, that I realise what my own mother went through – why she made me do my homework, go to bed early, stop beating my sister up, eat my broccoli, save my pocket money, don't talk to strangers, and say please and thank you.

Mother's Day might have become a cliché, but it does give us the perfect opportunity to say thank you to our mums for everything they have done and still do for us.

Anna Jarvis, who founded Mothers' Day in the US said she came to regret campaigning to get the day recognised, because it became commercialised. She hated that people sent cards with a pre-printed message rather than writing a letter.

So, although it's a nice gesture to buy a card and give flowers and chocolates, it's even nicer to do something special to show you care – maybe valet her car or treat her to a pamper session, or just visit and spend the afternoon



chatting. Time is the most precious gift of all.

And go beyond the message in the card. Write a few personal lines of your own to tell your mother what she means to you. Make sure she knows that she's loved and appreciated all year round.

THE FACTS

- Mother's Day is celebrated all around the world, usually in March or in May.
- In the UK, it is a mixture of a Christian tradition, and the celebration of motherhood that began in the USA in the early 20th century. During the 16th century, people in service would return to their home or 'mother' church on the fourth Sunday in Lent – Mothering Sunday.
- The modern version of Mothers' Day we know today became a regular event in the 1950s, largely thanks to businesses keen to exploit its commercial potential!

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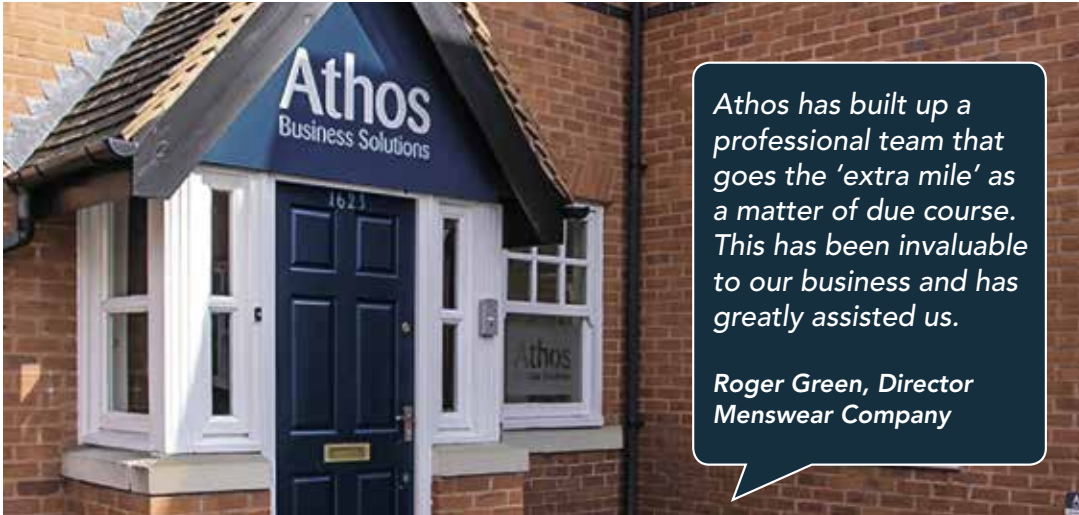


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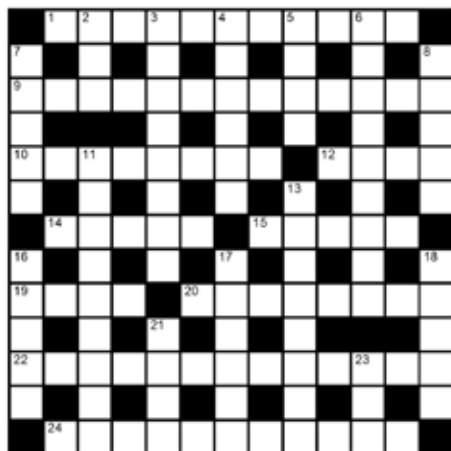
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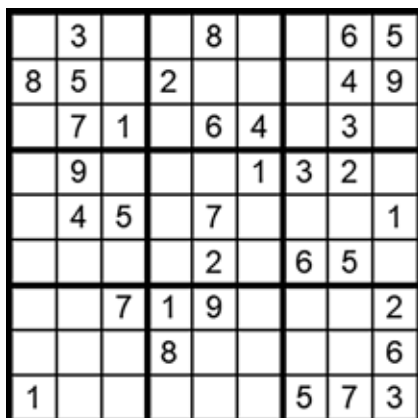
Across

- 1 Disaster (11)
- 9 Assistance, cheer (13)
- 10 Hastening, hurrying (8)
- 12 Tresses (4)
- 14 Bridle, harness (5)
- 15 Extravagant, ornamental (5)
- 19 Boundary, margin (4)
- 20 1024000 bytes (8)
- 22 Speculatively (13)
- 24 Clever, brainy (11)

Down

- 2 Bow, crescent (3)
- 3 Plentiful (8)
- 4 Locomotive (6)
- 5 Stove, kiln (4)
- 6 Pecking order (9)
- 7 Impression (5)
- 8 Tale (5)
- 11 Plant that retains leaves in winter (9)
- 13 Harmful (8)
- 16 Lure, entice (5)
- 17 Friend with whom you exchange letters (6)
- 18 East African country (5)
- 21 3D geometric shape with six faces (4)
- 23 Very long period of time (3)

answer on page 53



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 53

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In my wardrobe is a pair of Orla Kiely block-heeled patent sandals embellished with a flower design. They are several years old, and I've worn them maybe three times. Yet they make me happy. My friend Cleo has a pair of Christian Louboutin sequinned stilettos that she wore on her wedding day and has never worn since but which she swears will never part with.

Lots of women have a complicated relationship with footwear. We admire shoes, and we buy a lot of them. Why do we love them so much? Well...it's complicated.

Take the stiletto. At its most basic level, high heels make a woman stand differently. Her legs lengthen, the buttocks raise, and the spine arches, which mimics lordosis, a mating posture in the animal kingdom. Men are primed to find this posture attractive! Who knew?

And the advertising industry historically capitalised on this, using women in high heels to sell everything from perfume to cars! 'Sex sells!' came from the world of advertising. The initial idea was to get the blood racing in males (who traditionally held the financial power and made the buying decisions). Get a man excited about a product and he's more likely to part with cash. The 'excitement' at seeing a woman in heels attached itself to the object being advertised. So, women in high heels were draped over everything from BMWs to lawnmowers.

Fast forward to the 21st Century and women have financial independence, yet advertisers often still resort to using women in high heels to sell luxury items. Why? Mimetic behaviour.

We want to BE Kiera Knightly waffing through a party in heels and a designer frock, turning every head in the room. Of course, that's impossible...but wait a minute...we can buy the perfume or the lipstick and thus purchase a little of her sexiness for ourselves.

But shoes are not just about us buying into a sexy female trope. My Orla Kiely sandals (as you can see from the photo) are not super sexy. They are fun and a bit arty. They represent a more relaxed, more Bohemian me, and on the rare occasions I've worn them

I've felt different, more carefree, and 'interesting'. They are not everyday shoes. I need the right set of circumstances to wear them, and the memories of the days I've worn them are in part why they make me happy. Cleo says her Christian Louboutin shoes are like pieces of art, and that she felt like a work of art when she wore them to get married. Many women buy shoes they love and never even wear them, and most



of us would say we buy shoes for ourselves, rather than because of the effect they might have on a man. High heels can make us feel powerful, we literally raise our social status by increasing our height! And shoes, whether they are high, low, or trainer style can change the look of an outfit in seconds. Want to dress an outfit down a little, wear a white lace up trainer. Want to elevate jeans and a shirt from casual to smart? Add heels. In addition, because shoes are accessories we feel at liberty to experiment and choose bolder designs than we might do with the rest of our outfit.

And best of all, shoes still fit even if you gain a few pounds...unlike jeans. No wonder we love them.

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Meet Liam Davis, Technical Director at
Damar Security Systems.

Hi Liam, we see that many homes around Solihull are being protected by Damar Security Systems, you must be a very popular provider of home security.

Yes, we seem to be – we have been busy every day for over 26 years. In fact, there never seems to be quiet days. This is a great though as we love being busy!

In your opinion, what has been the reason for remaining as busy as you have over such a long period of time?

We care about what we do, and we give exceptional support to our client base. It bothers us when somebody has an alarm activation or a faulty camera, so we respond quickly. I think our swift support, whether over the phone or in person, highlights this to our clients. In return our clients stay with us.

What is important about home security?

That it's installed right for the client firstly. We don't believe in the 'national company trend' of "here is a alarm package and this is the price, accept the quote now and we will install tomorrow"... We believe that each client need is different, their homes have varied vulnerabilities and the reasons for having security is varied too. It's very important that the client is listened to, and that the alarm is fitted bespoke.

Do you only install new systems, or can you repair security systems that may not have been installed by Damar in the first instance?

Yes, we take on new clients with existing alarms. We are industry experts, so although it's not ours from day one, we are more than capable of getting any system operational and handed back over with full instruction. Sometimes for our engineers these jobs are the best as they can offer some interesting challenges.

So can you offer any advice to any of our readers who may be interested in repairing or modifying their existing systems but don't want to invest in a brand new installation?

Yes, if an existing system has life left and works then there is sometimes good reason to leave it as it is. However, if you need extra security or better security then we can offer this over a period of time in different stages. This is a very cost-effective way to get your home secure again

You seem to have a growing presence online now as well as in the streets of Solihull.

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British Pie Week March 7th -13th

It's British Pie Week again this month. We all know how delicious steak and kidney, chicken and mushroom and apple pies are, but this month why not branch out a little and try some more unusual fillings.

Vinegar Pie - Actually a dessert. It tastes sharply sweet, similar to lemon or our apple. The flavour is surprisingly fresh and pleasant, and the caramelised top gives it an elegant appearance. Cider vinegar is usually used but any fruit-infused vinegar would work. Historically it was made when fresh produce was scarce.

Sawdust Pie - Made from cookie crumbs, coconut and pecans, this pie gets its name from the appearance of the filling ingredients when they are mixed together. It's wonderfully delicious and crumbly, and perfect with vanilla ice cream.

Stargazy Pie is a traditional Cornish pie, made with pilchards and hardboiled eggs in a white sauce under a buttery pastry crust. It derives its name from the way the pilchard heads are arranged to poke out of the crust, staring skywards. It's a rich, salty, and hearty pie, and if you can get over the slightly freaky appearance it's worth a try, at least once.

Almost as bizarre, and certainly equally as weirdly named, is Funeral Pie, which gets its name from the fact it is served at Amish funerals. It's actually a rather lovely moist raisin pie, flavoured with cinnamon and all spice.

Recipes for all these pies can be found easily by searching on the internet.

Have fun with pies during British Pie Week.





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Under Pressure

As I pulled into the garage to check my tyre pressures like I do most Fridays after collecting my son from school, he asked, 'Why do you have to check the pressures anyway?'

Here's an interesting fact - 40% of car accidents related to faults (as opposed to driver error) are related to under inflated tyres! Though I reckon you could class that as driver error too because they omitted to check the pressure. Under-inflated are the most common reason for a blowout, where a tyre disintegrates while in motion. They are super scary and extremely dangerous.

Correctly inflated tyres last longer than those that are under-inflated. Tyres can lose 1-2 PSI (pounds per square inch) per month if unchecked, and driving on tyres underinflated by just 5 PSI can reduce the life of the tyre by 25%

Why tyre pressure is important

If you are concerned about the environment, or your finances, check your pressures. Under-inflated tyres can increase your fuel consumption by around 5%.

Tyres inflated to the correct pressure actually improve vehicle grip, handling, and steering. Under-inflated tyres increase stopping distances by up to eight metres, and even more if the road is wet or icy.

Overinflated tyres are more likely to overheat on long journeys, increasing the risk of a tyre blowout. They also make handling more difficult, especially on corners. Because they are 'harder' contact with the road is reduced meaning that the engine has to work harder and increasing petrol consumption.

The correct tyre pressures for your car can be found in the handbook or printed on the inside of the fuel tank flap, or the sill of the driver's door.

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Don't be fooled by a common law spouse

Unmarried couples do not share the same legal rights as those who are wedlocked – yet 2 in 3 people who are looking to buy a house aren't aware of the rules.

Dipika Mistry, Legal Director at Shakespeare Martineau in Solihull explains...

In a survey* of more than 500 people looking to buy their first or next home nearly half (47%) incorrectly believe a common law spouse exists, with a further 20% unsure of the difference in rights – meaning 67% of soon-to-be homeowners are at risk of losing out on what is rightfully theirs through a lack of knowledge.

Choosing to live together before getting married or entering into a civil partnership is pretty much the norm in today's society. Although it can provide a financially practical option, many couples fail to recognise the lack of protection of their assets if they separate. Regardless of what people read or hear, there is no such thing as a common law spouse. Unmarried couples who live together are merely cohabitantes and do not have the same rights as married or civil partnered couples. Even if they have lived under the same roof for 50 years, the court could treat them in the same way as friends living together.

In the event of a relationship breakdown, the less well-off party is at risk as they will not be able to make a claim for either maintenance, capital or pension provision. They can only claim their share of joint property and money, but anything held in the sole name of the other party is theirs to keep unless they can prove they have a beneficial interest, but this involves a complex legal claim called a TOLATA claim.

A way to get around this is to enter into a marriage or a civil partnership, or create a cohabitation agreement.

Being unmarried or not entering into a civil partnership also means neither of you are entitled to receive each other's assets on your respective deaths. If you want to benefit each other, you must prepare wills to state this. It might be possible in some circumstances to make a claim as a dependant under the Inheritance (Provision for Family and Dependents) Act 1975, but this involves a legal process, a court application and legal costs.

In the long-run, it will cost more to argue about it in litigation than to pay the costs of having an agreement in place. Until the law catches up with some of the modern ways of living, protecting your interests in the event of a relationship breakdown must be considered carefully.

*survey commissioned by Shakespeare Martineau January 2021



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Spring Clean Your Kitchen

If you feel overwhelmed at the thought of spring-cleaning, the kitchen is a great place to start.

First throw away obvious rubbish. Then empty the bin and take out the recycling.

Do the washing up (or load the dishwasher) and then wash out the bin and recycling containers with warm soapy water. Leave them upside down outside to dry.

Remove everything from the kitchen cupboards. Throw away empty containers, consolidate half-empty duplicates, and get rid of products you'll never use. Check 'use by' dates and get rid of embarrassingly ancient jars.

For pots, pans, cutlery, and crockery, be honest about what you use regularly and what you will use over the coming months. No-one really needs 29 mugs, surely.

Wipe down cabinets and put everything you're keeping back inside. Take stock of your kitchen gadgets. Those you use on a regular basis need to be within easy reach. Those you use less frequently can go on a higher shelf. If you know you haven't used a gadget in the last year, donate it or dispose of it. I realised this time that I will never use a milk-frother or a stand-alone steamer.

Fetch a step ladder or stool and wipe the tops of all kitchen cabinets. Then wipe the handles, walls, and light switches. Wipe down windowsills and polish windows with glass cleaner or white vinegar. Clean the countertops. Most can be cleaned with soapy water, but some require specialist cleaning products.

Wipe down any small appliances that live on the countertop — like the toaster or coffee machine.

Scrub the sink and faucet. You can use a specialist drain-cleaning product, but I use couple of tablespoons of bicarbonate of soda and a cup of white vinegar



poured down afterward. Let it sit for 30 minutes, and then pour a couple of kettles of hot water down to rinse it through.

Vacuum behind the fridge because dust can interfere with its efficiency. Then empty everything out and throw away expired food. Remove drawers and shelves and wash them in the sink with mild soapy water. Wipe everything down, paying special attention to the rubber seals that tend to collect crumbs. If your fridge is stainless steel, use either a specialty cleaner or a tiny amount of oil on a clean cloth to polish away fingerprints.

To clean a microwave, fill a glass bowl a cup of water and a tablespoon of white vinegar and microwave it for three minutes until it's boiling. This steam-clean will help soften caked-on food inside making it easier to wipe down.

Clean the stove top (and grates if you have a gas stove), with warm soapy water. You might need a degreaser on the hood, stovetop, and backsplash.

Finally deep clean and descale clean any regularly used items like the kettle and coffee pot. Rinse thoroughly.

Stand back and enjoy your kitchen. Then feel totally vindicated in buying a takeaway tonight so you don't mess it up again!

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COMPETITION



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Which touring Orchestra does Matt tour with as lead singer?

Email your answer to: thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk - and please put **'SWING'** as the subject line.

Closing date for entries is **1st April 2022**. The winner will be drawn at random and notified by email after this date.

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

About the show:

Matt Ford (BBC Proms, John Wilson Orchestra, BBC Big Band, Syd Lawrence Orch) and The Swing Legends band perform the hits of Frank Sinatra, Bobby Darin, Sammy Davis Jnr, Tony Bennett, Matt Monro and many more.

Matt is known as the UK's finest Big Band singer, helped by his numerous appearances in major concert halls. This show presents Matt at his best, an engaging personality, singing some of the best songs around.

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Latest Travel News & Updates

With the easing of restrictions in England, travel is bouncing back with many Brits eager to get away and resume their exploring.

The past couple of weeks have seen many countries also ease their restrictions, making it even easier to travel. Not only that, but with increased demand, we are seeing airlines and tour operators increase their capacity.

Here's what you may have missed this week:

- Bahrain eases its Covid restrictions for UK visitors
- Israel is set to drop vaccination requirements from next month
- The Cayman Islands drops arrival testing for those fully-vaccinated
- Jet2holidays has increased its capacity for Easter and spring
- Austria and Switzerland have both announced plans to relax their Covid-19 rules
- British Airways has added a daytime Newark flight from Heathrow
- Japan is set to relax Covid rules from March
- Finland and Lithuania have also relaxed their Covid-19 entry rules for UK travellers



This is all positive news for those looking to travel soon!

Travel to England from another country If you are fully vaccinated

Before you travel to England you must complete a passenger locator form. You need to do this in the 48 hours before you arrive in England.

You do not need to take any COVID-19 travel tests before you travel to England or after you arrive.

You do not need to quarantine when you arrive in England.

If you are not fully vaccinated This is what you need to do if you do not qualify under the fully vaccinated rules for travel to England.

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Beef in Guinness

St Patrick's Day is on March 17th. Celebrate with a casserole cooked in Guinness to make a delicious sauce.



Ingredients For the stew

2 tbsp oil
1kg braising steak, cut
into large pieces
2 tbsp plain flour,
well-seasoned
3 onions, sliced
500ml Guinness
2 sprigs thyme

For the dumplings

75g butter, frozen and
grated, or 75g suet
150g self-raising flour
1 small onion, grated
2 sprigs of thyme, leaves
stripped and chopped
Water for mixing

Method

Heat the oven to 150C/
fan 130C/gas 2.
Heat a little of the oil in a
large oven-proof pan.
Lightly flour the pieces of
braising steak and fry in
small batches until well
browned. Remove them
with a slotted spoon and
place them on a plate.

Add the onions to the pan
and fry on a fairly high heat
until they soften and tinge
brown at the edges.
Pour the Guinness into the pan,
letting it bubble up, then return
the meat to the pan along

with the thyme. Cover the pan
and transfer to the oven for 2-2
1/2 hours or until tender. The
sauce will sweeten and thicken
during the cooking time.
Make the dumplings towards
the end of the cooking time
by mixing the grated butter or
suet, flour, onion, and thyme
together and season well.
Gradually add water to the dry
ingredients until you have a soft
dough. Divide into 12 balls.

Place the dumplings on top
of the casserole and return it
to the oven, uncovered, for 25
minutes. Serve with shredded
cabbage or spring greens.

Do you want to grow your business?

If you want to meet more prospects, gain referrals, and network with other local businesses, then join the Knowle & Dorridge BOB Club.

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Swiss Chard

March means the start of outdoor sowing season in the UK, as the days begin to lengthen and become warmer. I discovered Swiss Chard several years ago when I was looking for something more interesting than spinach. It's rarely found in the supermarkets for some reason and is quite delicious. It's also easy to grow and doesn't require much maintenance.

Beta vulgaris subsp. cicla var. flavescens is sometimes called Rainbow Chard because of its ornamental stems. The fact it's so decorative, with its large fleshy dark green leaves and bright stalks in shades of red, purple, gold and white make it a good choice for a small garden. It looks attractive in containers or borders.

To grow it, choose a sunny (but not sun-baked) spot, prepare the soil well (or use compost in a large container), make shallow drills about 40cm apart and sow the chard seeds thinly, approximately 1.5cm deep. Cover the seeds with soil and water well. You can start sowing in March, then every few weeks you can repeat sow, until September for a continuous crop that will even see you through the winter if you give it a little protection. I move my pots to the greenhouse.

As the seedlings begin to grow, thin out the plants so that they're 25-30cm apart. Water well after thinning. Chard is an easy vegetable to look after but keep an eye open for slugs and snails. Birds also seem to like the little seedlings (at least in my garden) so you might need to protect them.

Young chard leaves can be eaten fresh so use the early thinned leaves for salads. The adult chard leaves are ready to harvest about 10-12 weeks after sowing, though later in the year it will take a little longer. It's a wonderful cut-and-come-again plant. Cut individual leaves as you need them, and the plant will keep producing new growth.

Swiss chard varieties to try

My favourite variety is 'Bright Lights' which has rainbow-coloured stems. It's particularly good for autumn crops. 'Fantasy' has pretty red stems and is good if your garden tends to be damp as it's resistant to mildew. As its name suggests 'Bright Yellow' has yellow stalks and is very striking.

All three of these varieties can be overwintered with a little protection and provide you with an early crop the following spring.





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

Sudoku Solution

from page 24

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

crossword Solution

from page 24

a good read

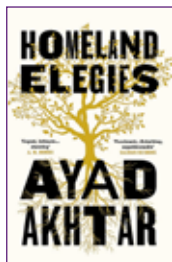
reviews By Willow Coby

Homeland Elegies

by Ayad Akhtar

Homeland Elegies is a novel which could be (and partly is) an autobiographical series of essays.

Mr. Akhtar is a cardiologist, non-practising Muslim, and supporter of Donald Trump. He and his wife were Pakistani migrants, professional educated people, who moved to the U.S, enticed by the 'American Dream.' 'Life is good and Ayad enjoys a privileged middle class US childhood. Then 9/11 happens and Ayad notices how attitudes towards his family change. The very first chapter explores the rise Donald Trump. If you have ever wondered what people see in Trump; how they are seduced by his message and how he came to power in spite of being dismissed as a showman, then Akhtar examines this using his relationship with his father as a way to explore this momentous change in the nation. Akhtar goes on to explore themes on American life, 9/11, partition, Muslim identity, family dynamics, and Salman Rushdie. It's not a light read but it is intelligently written, and the essay style of writing means that it can be read in bite-size sections. At its heart, Homeland Elegies is the story of a father, a son, and the country they both call home. It seamlessly blends fact and fiction to tell a story of belonging and dispossession in a post 9/11 world.



A Secret of Birds & Bone

by Kiran Millwood Hargrave

Sofia's mother is a bone builder, crafting exquisite creations from bones – fine furniture, complex locks, and even their entire house. One day though, Sofia's mother receives an unexpected and seemingly unwelcome guest, and after the visit neither Sofia nor her brother Ermin are allowed into her mother's workshop to see what their mother is working on. On Sofia's twelfth birthday her mother travels into the town but before she leaves she promises to explain everything to the children when she returns. But their mother is arrested and Sofia and Ermin end up in the care of the nuns at the orphanage, where children disappear in the middle of the night. When Sofia witnesses something first hand, she makes an unlikely ally and sets off to save her mother. The author has created a dark fantasy world of lost catacombs, secret tunnels and pools through which Sofia and her friends have to hunt for clues to her mother's true talents, and through their adventure discover the power of family and friendship.



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