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Summertime!

Welcome to the July edition

At the time of writing this the sky is distinctly overcast but here's hoping by the time this reaches you we are firmly in Summertime!

After all, there's loads of great places to visit in the local area, which are so much more enjoyable if the sun's shining. If you want some inspiration on what's on in the area, then head to page 6 where you can find out about fun runs and doggy brunches.

Wishing you a great month ahead. Until next month,

Zoe

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Ricky Gervais

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17th September

This local community fundraising event, now in its ninth year, is organised by local charity The Lily Mae Foundation, to enable participants to run in support of local and national charities and good causes. There are Mini Runs for nursery and primary aged children, 5K runs for Juniors and Families, and 5K and 10K Runs for Adults. To book your place please visit: www.stuweb.co.uk/event/4258

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Summer Tech!

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If you want to be the host with the most this summer I have two recommendations for you.

First up is the Ooni Karu 12, a multi-fuel outdoor pizza oven. This portable pizza oven, which can be fired by wood or gas was the hit of our summer last year. We used ours for a backyard birthday, two camping trips, at the beach and random summer Saturdays. The pizzas are delicious with an authentic stone-baked taste, while the fact its multi-fuel provides flexibility and convenience.

It had surprisingly high heat retention for its size and price which resulted in perfectly crispy crusts and delectably melted toppings. It definitely made us feel like accomplished hosts, and everyone enjoyed topping their own pizzas. Highly recommended.

Next I want to give a shout out to the Ninja CREAMi Ice Cream & Frozen Dessert Maker. I was gifted one for my birthday by my husband who knows I am an ice-cream-aholic. It's not cheap at nearly £200 but when you consider that a small tub of Ben and Jerry's is now

around £5 it will pay for itself in 20 weeks at one tub a week... and we are definitely more than a one tub a week family!

NOTE I am not affiliated with either company. These are my own recommendations.



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A Delightfully Quirky Affair

Pack up a hamper, it's National Picnic Month!

Ah, the British picnic! That delightful tradition combining outdoor dining with unpredictable weather, and an assortment of eccentricities. The main ingredients for a truly traditional British picnic are, a dash of optimism, a splash of stoicism, a sprinkling of humour and a tiny pinch of disappointment. First and foremost, there is the weather dance. No discussion about picnics in our green and pleasant land would be complete without someone looking upwards dubiously, sucking their cheeks in, and saying, 'Looks like rain.' As a nation we have mastered the art of packing for all four seasons in a single picnic basket. From sweltering sun to sudden showers, we

have evolved into experts at adaptive picnic planning. If there was an 'official British Picnic checklist' it would include sunscreen, insect repellent, a thick sweater an umbrella and a pac-a-mac! Every Brit is born knowing exactly what a picnic should look like: a wicker hamper, a checked picnic blanket, and an array of finger foods including dainty cucumber sandwiches, iced buns and freshly baked scones with clotted cream and jam, all washed down with ginger beer. This is because Enid Blyton and her Famous Five have somehow entered our collective subconscious, but we have been cruelly lied to. In reality it's usually slightly curled ham and cheese sandwiches dispensed from a Tupperware tub along with a packet of crisps, some soggy custard creams, and

lukewarm orange squash or (equally lukewarm) wine for the grown-ups. Games are compulsory at a British picnic. People whose idea of exercise for the rest of the year is getting up from the sofa to answer the front door, suddenly get all competitive and suggest a game of rounders, or croquet, or French cricket! This quickly descends into arguments about who is on which team, who gets (or shouldn't get) Grandma, and whether there should be second chances at hitting a ball. But it's all about the friendly competition and the odd black eye is just part of the fun. But us Brits know that all the shenanigans is just a warm-up for the main event. As the afternoon rolls on, the time nears for the one British tradition everyone looks forward to, Pimms o'clock. This refreshing cocktail, filled with fruits, herbs, and a splash of gin, is the quintessential picnic libation. As the glasses clink and laughter fills the air, the true spirit of the British picnic finally comes alive. It's a time to relax, enjoy the company of friends and loved ones, and revel in the joy of this whimsical outdoor affair.



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Court queues leave bereaved families in 'limbo'

From house sales collapsing to investments plummeting in value – civil service delays are causing huge disruption and emotional anguish to bereaved families trying to administer estates, explains Hannah Tait, partner at Solihull-based law firm Shakespeare Martineau.

What is probate?

After someone passes away, a grant of probate is a vital step to allowing the executors legal control over the deceased's estate. Without it, families can be left unable to sell their loved one's home or access their bank account to distribute the estate and their inheritance to the beneficiaries.

HM Courts and Tribunal Service (HMCTS) has been working with huge backlogs in processing probate applications since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic. While delays are improving, executors can still expect a 16-week wait before they are issued their grant of probate, according to the latest data.

What the delays mean for families

These delays are, rightly, causing huge frustration and anxiety for bereaved families who are having to pay the price as a result of faults within the system.

We've seen clients losing out on property sales as buyers have been unwilling to put up with the long wait times for a grant of probate to be issued, which is needed before a sale can be legally completed. Due to stock market volatility arising from the war in Ukraine, we've also seen a deceased clients' investment portfolios significantly lose value as executors have had to wait for the grant to be issued before being able to sell the shares.

These lengthy delays are exhausting for grieving families, who are already going through a difficult time dealing with their loss and trying to sort out the complex administration related to the death of a loved one. They are being left in limbo.

What can families do?

Unfortunately, there is no shortcut or way to avoid the delays when applying for grant of probate. The onus is on the government to come up with a way to get through the backlog and speed up the current process. In the meantime, we recommend seeking legal assistance with the estate administration to ensure the application is carefully prepared, and completed and submitted correctly and taking advice during lifetime to ensure that assets are held correctly and to ensure the process is as seamless as possible.

Longer term, if clients are keen to avoid problems in the future, we recommend they seek legal advice, have joint accounts, and make sure their pensions' expressions of wishes and insurance nominations are up to date.



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The Art of the Matter

Children's Art Week June 29th-July 19th

Children's Art Week (it's actually three weeks) is run by Engage - the National Association for Gallery Education. During this time, schools, art galleries, museums and community groups are encouraged to plan and provide art activities and events with the goal of providing opportunities for children, young people, and families to take part in practical activities with artists and art educators. Artistic activities play a vital role in children's development, fostering creativity, imagination, and self-expression. Engaging in drawing, painting, sculpting, and music, provides children with a wealth of benefits that extend far beyond the artistic realm.

Creativity and Imagination

Artistic activities encourage children to think outside the box, fostering their creativity and imagination. Through art, children can freely explore and express their thoughts, emotions, and ideas in unique and innovative ways. This creativity helps them develop problem-solving skills, critical thinking

abilities, and the capacity to approach challenges from different perspectives.

Fine Motor Skills Drawing, painting, and sculpting require precise movements and coordination of the hands and fingers. As children manipulate brushes, pencils, or clay, they develop dexterity, hand-eye coordination, and control over their motor skills. These skills not only benefit their artistic endeavours but also translate to other areas of their lives, such as writing, typing, and playing sports.

Emotional Development

Art provides a safe and expressive outlet for children to process and communicate their emotions. Children can explore a range of feelings and experiences, giving voice to thoughts and emotions that may be difficult to express verbally. Art fosters emotional intelligence, empathy, and self-awareness, allowing children to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others.

Self-Confidence and

Self-Expression Creating something unique and meaningful instils a sense of pride and accomplishment in children, which boosts self-esteem. Art also encourages



self-expression, allowing children to communicate their thoughts and ideas in a non-judgmental environment.

Cultural Appreciation and

Diversity Through art, children can learn about different art movements, styles, and artists from around the world, expanding their knowledge and understanding of different cultures. This exposure encourages tolerance, respect, and acceptance of diverse traditions and beliefs. Participating in artistic activities is a valuable and enriching experience for children. Encouraging and supporting children in their artistic endeavours is an investment in their overall development and well-being. But over and above all the benefits mentioned here art is quite simply FUN! Why not find out what's going on in your area?

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a good read

By Natasha Donovan

Tangerine

by Christine Mangan

Tangerine is a gripping psychological thriller set in the 1950s that follows the tumultuous friendship between two women, Alice Shipley and Lucy Mason, and the dark secrets that bind them.

Alice Shipley is a fragile and reclusive young woman who resides in Tangier, Morocco, with her husband, John. She is haunted by a tragic incident from her college days. One day she receives an unexpected visit from Lucy Mason, her former roommate and estranged friend, whom she hasn't seen in over a year.

Lucy's arrival triggers a series of unsettling events. Alice is plunged into a state of paranoia and uncertainty over her visitor's ambiguous intentions and begins to question Lucy's motives. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes clear that both Alice and Lucy are harbouring secrets and that their past is deeply intertwined.

When something momentous happens under suspicious circumstances, tensions escalate and Alice must confront the truth about her past, the nature of her friendship with Lucy, and the true identity of the people around her.

Mangan skilful storytelling delves into themes of obsession, identity, and betrayal. The intense atmosphere of Tangier serves as a backdrop for the complex relationship between Alice and Lucy. A gripping cat-and-mouse game unfolds, with high stakes, and a shocking revelation.

Tangerine is a gripping and atmospheric thriller that explores the dark corners of friendship and the consequences of deceit.



The Buried Crown

by Ally Sherrick

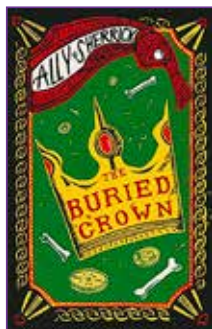
The year is 1940, and George Penny is evacuated from London to live with his Aunt May in the countryside.

While exploring the nearby ruins of an old castle, George discovers a hidden underground chamber. Inside, he stumbles upon a medieval crown that belonged to King Alfred the Great, the legendary English king.

But George soon realizes that the crown is more than just a relic. It is rumoured to possess mystical powers and is sought after by a group of sinister individuals, known as the Skull brothers, who are determined to use it for their own nefarious purposes.

With the help of a brave and resourceful girl named Kitty, George embarks on a dangerous quest to keep the crown safe from the Skull brothers. Along the way, they encounter secret codes, ancient riddles, and unexpected allies. Their journey takes them across the English countryside, from hidden tunnels to perilous cliffs, as they race against time to protect the crown and prevent it from falling into the wrong hands.

As George and Kitty unravel the secrets surrounding the crown, they uncover a deeper connection to King Alfred and his legacy. The fate of the crown becomes intertwined with their own personal journeys of courage, friendship, and discovering the true meaning of heroism. Sherrick's fast-paced prose writing will keep her young readers on the edge of their seats.



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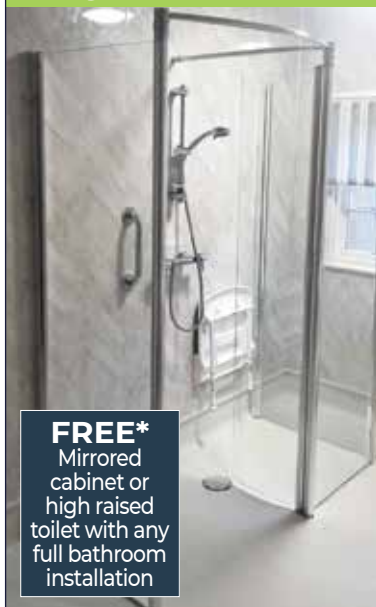


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For your chance to win, email zoe@dorridgedirectory.com with the subject line Melvin and you will be added to our database to receive our monthly e-newsletter about offers and events in Solihull. The winners will be notified by email after the closing date of 10 August 2023. There is no cash value nor exchanges for the prizes.

Choose the right sunhat

When it comes to protecting ourselves from the harmful effects of the sun, a reliable sunhat is an indispensable accessory. While fashion may play a role in our choice, it is crucial to prioritize the protective aspects of your head gear.

Wide Brim: A wide brim helps shield your face, neck, and ears from direct sunlight, minimizing the risk of sunburn and long-term damage caused by UV radiation. Opt for a hat with a brim that extends at least three

inches (7.5cm) all around, providing ample coverage.

UPF (Ultraviolet Protection

Factor) Rating: Did you know that any hat marketed as a 'sunhat' has to have a UPF rating? UPF measures the level of UV radiation that can penetrate the fabric. Look for sunhats with a high UPF rating, ideally, one with a UPF rating of 50+ as this will block more than 98% of harmful UV rays.

Fit: Finally make sure you choose the right size! A too-tight hat can cause a headache, while one that's too loose can be annoying. If

you plan to be out in the wind look for hats with adjustable chin straps or drawstrings. People with thin hair are more susceptible to sun-related skin cancers on their head. A good sunhat can save your life.



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