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for residents of knowle and dorridge

may 2024

directory



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# Marvellous May!

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It's also a great time for getting your garden looking lovely and for selling your home. We've got a great range of local, reliable businesses in here who can help you get your garden ready and update any aspect of your home, from your roof to your kitchen, your bathroom to your décor, whether you're getting it ready to sell or just want to update it for your own benefit.

Wishing you a great month ahead. Until next month,



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# community events

## Great British Musicals

**1 June 7.30pm, Knowle Village Hall**

The Strolling Players invite you to join them as they present songs from great British musicals, such as "The Lion King", "Salad Days", "Chess" and "Pickwick" as well as music from Lloyd Webber, Ivor Novello and much more. Tickets £10 - please call 01564 777634.

## Charity Craft Material Sale

**4 June 10.30 - 1.30, Warwick Room at Shirley Institute, Shirley B90 2AX**

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## Girls Aloud

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greatest performers of all time is portrayed by Mark Lavell (Pure Magic) and his supporting Queen band, including hits such as Bohemian Rhapsody, Barcelona, Killer Queen and more. To book please call 01675 444890.

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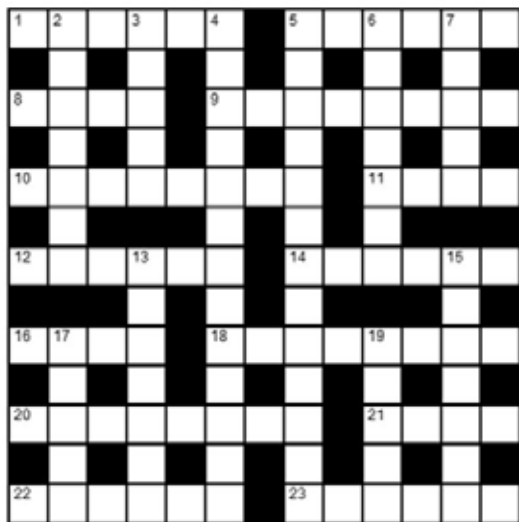


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## crossword



## clues

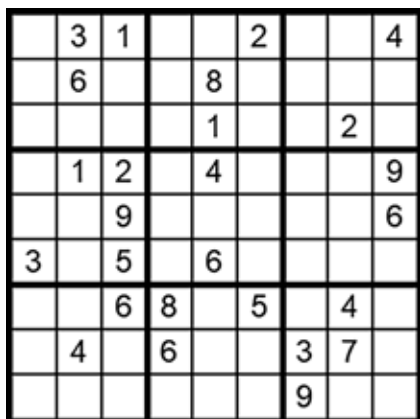
### Across

- 1 Pleasantly occupied (6)
- 5 Douse, drench (6)
- 8 Wide smile (4)
- 9 Party game (8)
- 10 Not damaged (8)
- 11 Valueless (4)
- 12 Rush-hour shortcut (informal) (6)
- 14 Fall asleep (informal) (6)
- 16 Minor confrontation (4)
- 18 Ratifying, embracing (8)
- 20 Appeased (8)
- 21 Three squared (4)
- 22 Causes hay fever (6)
- 23 Win back, pay off (6)

### Down

- 2 English actress \_\_\_\_\_  
Hart (7)
- 3 Father Christmas (5)
- 4 Evidence, proof (13)
- 5 Automated payment (8,5)
- 6 Educated (7)
- 7 Metal alloy (5)
- 13 Hear the same legal case  
again (7)
- 15 Economic affairs (7)
- 17 Keyboard instrument (5)
- 19 Fit, sleek (5)

answer on page 34



## 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 34



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## Bank Holidays Why do we have them?

**B**efore 1834, the Bank of England and other institutions observed 33 closure days annually for festivals and saints' days. This number was significantly reduced in 1834 to just four: May Day, All Saints Day, Good Friday, and Christmas Day, reflecting the changes brought about by the industrial revolution and the need for more regulated banking operations.

The Bank Holidays Act of 1871, driven by Sir John Lubbock, a Liberal politician and banker, expanded the holidays to include Easter Monday, Whit Monday, the first Monday in

August, and Boxing Day, while May Day was omitted for its pagan connotations, and New Year's Day was added for Scotland, recognizing its distinct traditions like Hogmanay.

The Banking and Financial Dealings Act 1971 updated these holidays, replacing Whit Monday with the late May spring holiday, moving the August bank holiday to the last Monday of the month, and reintroducing May Day as Labour Day in 1978. Bank holidays are annually declared by royal proclamation, which also allows for adjustments if these dates



fall on weekends - a practice not common worldwide.

May is a good month for bank holidays every year... because we get two!

May Day remains a celebration of spring and renewal, with local festivities reflecting ancient traditions. But perhaps the most widely recognised custom on all bank holidays is a modern one... the chance to do some DIY!

## Grief and money make the perfect storm.

**Hannah Tait, partner at law firm Shakespeare Martineau explains why the absence of a clear and legally binding will could ignite unnecessary heartache and financial burden for families left behind.**

### **What are the consequences of dying without a will?**

If an individual passes away without having made a will, their net estate of up to £322,000 (known as the 'statutory legacy') will automatically pass to a spouse or civil partner, along with 50% of the remaining estate. The remaining 50% will go to any children and if there are no children, it will all pass to the surviving spouse.

For those with an estate of less than £322,000, the surviving spouse or civil partner will inherit it all. Importantly however, this benefit is not extended to cohabiting couples, highlighting the potential vulnerability of unmarried partners, who often think of themselves as common law partners, which unfortunately for them has no recognised legal status. People in this "legal black hole" could therefore end up with nothing if their partner passes away without the appropriate planning and advice.

### **The importance of planning**

Without a will, the distribution of an estate will be subject to arbitrary rules and can lead to unintended consequences. The strict rules of intestacy may not account for step-children or other financial dependents or take into account the specific circumstances or wishes of the person concerned.

Family structures have changed enormously with people now forming part of blended families, involved in second marriages with stepchildren or simply cohabiting. These families can face unique challenges when the rules of intestacy are applied. Disputes and claims from dependents seeking a share of "the pot" can become commonplace and can lead to further and unnecessary stress, friction and cost.

### **Preventing heartache**

One of the most significant benefits of thorough estate planning is certainty and the comfort of sparing our loved ones unnecessary heartache and financial burden during an already challenging time. By clearly articulating our wishes and distributing assets in a well-documented manner, we alleviate the burden on our grieving family members, avoiding lengthy, contentious legal battles and the emotional strain that comes with them. Tailored estate planning with those who we trust in control can minimise legal costs in the long run and avoid disputes over asset distribution and the direction of an estate.

Navigating the complexities of estate planning can be daunting, but seeking professional guidance can provide invaluable support.



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# a good read

By Natasha Donovan

## The Memory Police

by Yoko Ogawa

This is a hauntingly beautiful and dystopian novel that delves into the fragility of memory and the essence of loss. Set on an unnamed island, the story unfolds in a world where objects and concepts are systematically disappearing, erased from existence and memory by the enigmatic Memory Police. The narrative is centred around a young novelist who struggles to preserve her memories and those of the island's inhabitants. Ogawa's writing is elegantly simple yet profoundly deep, weaving a tale that is as much a melancholic meditation on memory as it is a compelling story of resistance and survival. The island's inhabitants, resigned to the relentless loss of their surroundings, adapt to each disappearance with a troubling nonchalance. This eerie acceptance of loss is one of the novel's most chilling aspects, highlighting the insidious nature of the Memory Police's power. The novelist (who is also unnamed), with the help of an old man and a risk-taking editor who is immune to the forgetfulness, attempts to defy the Memory Police by hiding her editor in a secret room. Their struggle against the inevitable tide of forgetfulness forms the heart of the story, illustrating the human capacity for resilience in the face of oppressive forces. The atmosphere of subtle suspense and creeping dread imbues the story with a quiet intensity. The characters are sketched with a delicate touch, yet they are profoundly relatable in their quest to hold onto their memories and identities. This struggle against the erasure of memory becomes a powerful metaphor for the larger human experience of loss and the effort to preserve our own pasts. The Memory Police is not just a story about



an authoritarian regime's control over personal memories; it is also a reflection on the impermanence of existence. Ogawa explores the idea that what makes us human is not just our ability to remember but also our capacity for empathy and connection.

## Clem and Crab

This is a lovely story about cleaning up our beaches. The story is a simple one: Clem loves to search the beach for things to put in her bucket. After a fun day at the seaside, Clem finds a Crab with its claw tangled in a plastic bag. She wants to take him home and keep him safe, but reluctantly lets him go back to the sea after her sister explains it's where he belongs. On her way home on the bus, Clem finds Crab tucked away in her trouser leg, and Crab ends up going on an adventure to Clem's school and inspires Clem to want to help clear the beaches of horrible plastic junk. The story is fun and easy to follow, and the illustrations are charming. The environmental message is there but it's never preachy. It's a nice gentle introduction for children about the importance of taking care of our planet.



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# Britain's Mould Problems

## Why are our homes so damp?

**B**ritain's homes have a damp problem. Damp can cause damage to your home and if left untreated for a long period of time, it can also cause health problems too. It's estimated that at least 20% of renters in the UK are affected by damp and mould. The main problem is the age of the housing stock. The UK has some of the oldest housing stock in Europe. During the industrial revolution many houses were erected quickly in towns and cities to house the influx of workers, and many have not been properly maintained. Houses built before 1925 were constructed with solid walls which needed insulating, but the costs were prohibitive for many homeowners and councils. New build properties in Britain have damp proof cavity walls, but demand exceeds supply, and many renters have no option but to stay in properties unsuitable for habitation. Incorrectly installed cavity wall insulation can cause damp problems too. There are properties that had cavity wall insulation installed in



error because they were not suitable for the treatment. In these cases, the insulation can act as bridge for the moisture to penetrate its way through into the inner walls of the house. Any gaps in the walls or windows of a house, will also mean your home is more vulnerable to damp problems. The UK is a pretty damp place in general, and climate change means that while we are not necessarily experiencing more rainfall, we are experiencing more extreme rainfall, which adds to underlying problems. Condensation occurs when moisture laden air comes into contact with a cold surface e.g., a window or a wall. Normal activities such as bathing and cooking are the source of condensation. If heating is not turned on regularly or there is not sufficient ventilation, then moisture starts to build up on cold surfaces. Black mould spots as a result of condensation start to appear

and will eventually lead to more serious damp problems. High energy costs mean many people are trying to use their heating as little as possible at the moment, and this is adding to the issue. If damp and mould are a problem in your home, contact a member of the Property Care Association (PCA) who can arrange for someone to assess dampness within your walls and check whether or not cavity wall insulation is the root cause of the problem. Any gaps in the walls or windows should be sealed as soon as possible to stop damp from penetrating its way through. A qualified structural engineer should carry out any remedial works to fix structural defects allowing moisture to enter the house. Ventilation and heating are key areas that have to be addressed to stop condensation from forming. Check your boiler efficiency. It might be worthwhile upgrading it. Proper ventilation can have a significant impact on reducing the amount of moisture laden air in your home. Ventilation can be improved by the installation of extractor fans or positive input ventilation systems.





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# Boot Bargains

Car boot sales are a quintessential British tradition where unpredictable British weather meets an equally unpredictable array of goods for sale. You can haggle over the price of a teapot with a missing lid on one stall and buy a questionable painting that may be a lost masterpiece (spoiler: it's not) at another.

Car boot sales are the adult equivalent of a treasure hunt, where 'X' marks the spot, but 'X' is a muddy field somewhere between No-Idea-Where-That-Is and 'Didn't-Aunty-Sue-Get-Married-Somewhere-Near-There.

Jesting aside, if you're up for a bit of work a car boot sale is a great opportunity to clear out your attic, shed, or spare room while making some cash and enjoying the fresh air.

## Begin with a Clear Out:

Sort through your items. Anything from vintage clothing to old records, books, toys, and kitchen gadgets can find a new home.

Remember, one person's trash is another's treasure.

**Price to Sell:** Be realistic about pricing. Boot sale buyers are looking for bargains. A good rule of thumb is to ask yourself what you'd be willing to pay. Label items clearly.

**Presentation is Key:** A well-organized stall can make a world of difference to how much you earn. Arrange items so they're easy to browse. Group similar items together and make sure everything is clean. A little bit of preparation can significantly increase your sales.

**Be Prepared:** Bring plenty of change and bags for your customers. Arrive early to get a good spot. A folding table and chair, a flask of coffee and a sandwich can also make your day more comfortable.



**Perfect Your Pitch:** Friendly banter and a smile will attract more buyers. Be ready to haggle...it's an art. The seller starts with a price, the buyer counters with an offer so ridiculously low it's actually insulting, and eventually, you meet somewhere in the middle, each convinced you've outsmarted the other. Just remember that if YOU'RE the one decluttering and selling, the object of the exercise is to get rid of everything, not

## Let the car boot sale season begin.

take it all back home with you for the sake of a few pence!

And it's not just about the buying and selling. Car boot sales are essentially a social event, places where you overhear phrases like, "Remember when we nearly set the house on fire with this fondue set?"\* or "Do you think anyone will notice this shoe is missing a heel?" \*

As the day ends, you head back to your car, hopefully cutter-free and cash-rich if you're a seller, or arms laden with goodies if you were a treasure seeker. And if you're lucky you might overhear a puzzled wife say to her husband, "Why did you buy a unicycle when you can barely ride a bike without stabilisers..." \*\*

Whether you are looking to declutter or in search of a bargain, the car boot sale is great British tradition so check out a local one this month. There may or may not be a woman surreptitiously selling a unicycle. \*\*\*

*\*Actual overheard snippets of conversation from other sellers when we held a car boot sale last year!*

*\*\*I may or may not have been that puzzled wife.*

*\*\*\*That woman may or may not be me...*

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# Double cheese and Spring Vegetable Tart



**Preparation time:** 30 mins

**Cooking time:** 1 hours

**Serves:** 8

## Ingredients

500g block shortcrust pastry  
plain flour, for dusting  
25g mature cheddar,  
finely grated.  
200g asparagus spears,  
woody ends trimmed.  
100g frozen peas  
2 eggs  
100g crème fraîche  
150g double cream  
whole nutmeg, for grating  
100g watercress  
2 x 150g logs of soft,  
rindless goat's cheese.

## Method

Take the pastry out of the fridge ten minutes before starting. Lightly dust the work surface with flour then roll the pastry out into a rectangle.

Scatter the grated cheese over the rolled-out pastry, fold the pastry in half and roll out again into a circle that fits a 25cm tart tin. Leave the edges of the pastry slightly overhanging the edge of the tin. Pop it in the fridge for 20 mins to chill. Meanwhile, cook the asparagus in boiling water for 3 mins, then drain and refresh under cold water. Defrost the frozen peas. Preheat the oven to 200C / 180C fan / gas 6. Prick the base of the tart well with a fork, line with baking parchment and fill with baking beans or dried lentils. Bake the tart for 30 mins, remove the parchment and beans, prick again if it has puffed up,

then bake for another 10-15 mins until golden brown. Meanwhile, beat the eggs in a bowl, add the crème fraîche and cream, season and add a pinch of freshly grated nutmeg. Scatter the peas and most of the watercress over the tart and crumble over half the goat's cheese. Pour over the creamy egg mixture, then lay the asparagus spears on top. Finally, slice the remaining goat's cheese and arrange on top, then bake for 25-30 mins until the custard is just set and the cheese is golden brown. Leave to cool in the tin, trim the edges of the pastry. Remove from the tin, cut into slices, and serve with the remaining watercress.



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# L of a Question!

## If you sat your driving test again would you pass?

**A**re you a better than average driver?

When asked, most of us assert that we are but that would be impossible mathematically!

Every day as I drive to and from work it

seems that I encounter just about every lunatic and his mother. People on their phones apparently texting; men shaving and women applying eyeliner in their rear-view mirror while zooming along in the fast lane. People who don't use their headlights and fog lights correctly, or at all! And last week I was nearly taken off the road completely by someone who failed to check their blind spot before they began an overtaking manoeuvre.

I muttered a few choice words, then caught sight of a speed sign and realised that actually I was driving nearly 10 miles per hour over the speed limit...hmm, maybe I was one of the idiots on another driver's journey. This was a sobering thought.

At home again I looked up the theory part of the current driving test. I passed my own test back in the eighties before this became a requirement. I



found an online mock exam and took it without doing any preparation. I passed but not with the full marks I imagined I'd get. I scored 45/50 and the pass mark is 43. All the questions I got wrong were those about icy conditions. I fared somewhat better in the hazard awareness test scoring 68/75 (pass mark 44).

I didn't feel up to taking my practical test again, but I did book a taster session at a local centre which offers advanced driving-skills packages, including skid-pan training, defensive driving, and advanced road skills. It was this last one which interested me particularly and I asked my instructor to assess my normal driving standard.

I admit to feeling pleasantly surprised when, after we'd driven around for a while, he said, 'Not bad actually.' If he'd left it there I'd have been happy but... 'Unfortunately,' he added, 'You've picked up a few bad habits over the years.'

His main criticism was that I under-used my mirrors (at least I didn't use them to retouch my lipstick while negotiating a roundabout), and he was not at all impressed by my parallel parking skills...which is probably a fair assessment.

I enjoyed the session and found it valuable: so valuable that I've booked a half-day course which includes use of a skid pad...after my disastrous showing in the theory test I think I need some help handling icy conditions!

Perhaps a few more of us would benefit from a refresher course. Anything which makes us safer drivers has to be good thing doesn't it?

### **MOST COMMON BAD HABITS**

#### **Driving too fast** -

especially through built-up areas, roadworks and during wet weather.

#### **Under-use of mirrors.**

#### **Not looking far enough**

**ahead** - less reaction time to hazards.

**Tailgating** - driving too close to the car in front.

#### **Wrong seating position**

- generally set too low which affects visibility.

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# Nutritious nettles

**A**s a novice gardener I spent a lot of time pulling out nettles from the overgrown patch I inherited when I bought my first home. Fast forward twenty years and I have learned that I was doing the humble nettle a disservice.

Contrary to their reputation for stinging and being a pervasive nuisance, nettles offer numerous (and free) benefits. These include serving as a rich nutrient source for your garden, attracting helpful insects, and even being a delightful edible option when gathered properly.

You can leverage the nutrient-rich nature of nettles by making a homemade, organic liquid fertilizer. Nettles are packed with some fabulous garden-friendly elements such as nitrogen, calcium, and magnesium, all vital for plant growth.

Any part of the plant can be used, even the older, tougher parts, and the process is straightforward. Chop the nettles and pack them into a sealable container (to mitigate any unpleasant smells) before submerging them in water. Let the mixture sit for about a month to create a potent nettle tea. Dilute this tea with water in a ratio of 1:10 for a

nutrient-rich feed, ideal for nurturing leafy greens like kale, chard, and spinach.

Nettles also double as an excellent mulch for bigger plants or fruit bushes and act as a compost accelerator by enhancing the breakdown process in your compost pile. However, avoid using the roots or seeds, to prevent unintended growth.

By allowing some nettles to grow on your patch, you support the lifecycle of butterfly species such as red admiral, small tortoiseshell, painted lady, and comma butterflies, and also offer a habitat for beneficial insects such as ladybirds, which control aphid populations and other garden pests.

In addition to their usefulness in the garden, nettles are a versatile ingredient in the kitchen. Using gloves to avoid the stings, nettles can be harvested and used just like spinach, boasting a similar high iron content. They're perfect for steaming or as the base for a soup - blend boiled potatoes and tender nettles with vegetable stock, season and enrich with a spoon of cream for a hearty dish...perfect after a day working in the garden!



**Mindbenders**  
Can you find the hidden phrases?

**LANE**  
LANE

man  
board

the  $\pi$  sky

answers on page 34

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1. The fast lane
2. Man overboard
3. Pie in the sky

**mindbenders**  
from page 33

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

**Sudoku Solution**  
from page 12

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

**Crossword Solution**  
from page 12

# Mental Health Awareness Week 2024

**Takes place 13 to 19 May on the theme 'movement: moving more for our mental health'.**

**P**hysical activity is great for our body and mind. Exercise triggers our bodies to release feel good hormones that act as natural mood lifters, it reduces the symptoms of anxiety and depression, and promotes sleep.

Getting moving positively impacts on our physical and emotional wellbeing, yet it isn't always a priority in our

busy lives. Reshaping daily routines is a great way to invest in our wellbeing. Not everyone feels comfortable going to the gym, or has aspirations to run a marathon. We need to find moments for movement that feel comfortable; dancing around the kitchen, chair exercises, playing football in the park. Exercise is an opportunity to connect with others, build self-confidence and self-esteem; all of which contribute to our mental health.

Like our muscles, the brain needs exercise to build strength

and resilience, support when strained and time to recover. Therapy can be exercise for our emotional wellbeing and offers a supportive space to explore life's challenges. It can often be seen as the last resort, yet therapy can also be a way to 'move more for mental health'.

Dr Danielle Grey from the Purple House Clinic.

**The clinic is based in Coleshill and offers psychological health care.**

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