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## Welcome to the November edition...

By the time this arrives Christmas will only be about 6 weeks away! Check out page 6 to see what local Christmassy events are on. If you fancy treating yourself to a night out before the main event, find out what's on at the cinema and the Core theatre in November on page 30.

You've just about got time to make any last-minute changes to your home in time for Christmas so remember to support local businesses as they really value their customers – we have a great collection of local tradespeople and businesses who are local and are looking for your custom.

Here's hoping the pre-Christmas build up isn't too hectic and that you find the time to relax, maybe over a glass of mulled wine and a mince pie!

Until next month...



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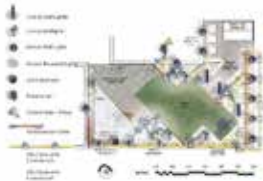
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# community events

## Christmas Craft Fair

**23 November, 10am – 4pm**  
**Bentley Heath Community Hall, Bentley Heath.**

There will be a selection of stalls selling Christmas Craft gifts and decorations as well as Tombola, Bottle, Cake and Home Produce stalls. Refreshments, including lunch, will be available all day and Father Christmas will be making an appearance too! Proceeds in aid of St Philip's Building for the Future Project.

## Christmas Fayre

**30 November, 10am – 1pm**  
**Knowle Village Hall**

The Knowle Village Hall Association and the Knowle Flower Club invite you to a Christmas Fayre. There will be the Flower Club's lovely Christmas Door Wreaths for sale, cakes and preserves, cards and gifts, a Tombola, Guess the Weight of the Cake and much more to enjoy. If you need a rest - tea, coffee and home-made mince pies will be available. Father Christmas will be looking in too. This is a Knowle Village Hall Fund Raising Event. Do join us.

## Silver Celebration

**14 December, 7.30pm**  
**Knowle Village Hall**

It is 25 years since the Strolling Players began to sing at Knowle Village Hall and so, to remember this, they are presenting "Silver Celebration", a concert for the Festive Season. The programme includes

some G. and S. folk songs, numbers from the musicals, Christmas music and more - a very tuneful mixture. Tickets £10 from David Duggins 01564 772071. This concert is in support of the Alzheimer's Society.

## Christmas in the Park

**1 December, 12noon – 3pm**  
**Brueeton Park, B91 3HA**

Father Christmas is making a special appearance in the park so come and visit him in his grotto to receive a small gift! Book a time slot in advance - 0121 704 8000. Other entertainment includes carols at 1pm, a festive treasure trail and a Christmas craft activity at the Parkridge Centre. £3 per child. Meet by the car park.

## Lunch with Santa

**8 December**

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## Festive Feast and Outdoor Cinema

**16-22 December**

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The Festive Feast will be back for another year! Get your last-minute stocking fillers and a tasty bite to eat for lunch. Also look out for the return of the free Christmas outdoor cinema.



## KNOWLE LIBRARY

- **Jellybeans** – held monthly on a Thursday morning for story-time and rhymes for the under 5's 10.45am -11.30am
- **Monday Story Times** - Weekly story time and rhymes for toddlers and pre-school children 10.30am-11.00am
- **Under - fives** Rhyme Times at 2pm every Friday
- **Knowle Knit and Natter Group** – held monthly on a Tuesday 10.30am -11.30am
- **The Reading Café** – Monthly on a Friday morning 10.30am -11.30am
- **Self-Running Family History Group** – Monthly on a Tuesday 2.15pm -4.00pm
- **Reader's Circles** – Knowle Readers Circle meets monthly on a Friday 2.15pm
- **Knowle Library Self Running Readers Circle** monthly meeting Tuesday 11.00am -12pm
- **Poetry Group** - Monthly on a Tuesday 11.00am -12.00pm
- **Scrabble Club** - Adult Scrabble Club Fortnightly – Thursday 2.00pm



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SATURDAY 14<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER

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The Wonderful Carols On the Green, from 6.30pm.  
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## **Saturday 21st December**

Christmas Quiz, from 9pm.  
Fun quiz with loads of prizes. £5 entry fee per team (max 4 people per team).  
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## **Christmas Eve**

Book your family dinner before midnight mass in the church from 11.30pm.

## **Christmas Day**

Open for drinks 12noon till 2pm. Lunch fully booked, sorry - but you can book for 2020.

## **Boxing Day**

Shake off the celebrations with a good walk then book lunch at The Bell - food served 12noon till 4pm.

## **Saturday 28th December**

Christmas Jumper & Curry Night, from 7pm.  
Home-made curry with rice, naan & poppadom for £10.95 pp. Prizes for the best and worst Christmas jumper.

## **New Year's Eve Dinner**

Order off our regular menu then we'll crank up the music from 10pm. Enjoy balloons on the green at Midnight.

## **New Year's Day**

Lunch served 1pm till 4pm.



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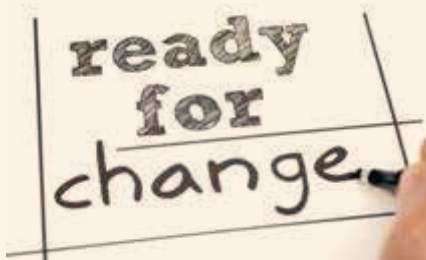
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# What to do in December?

## Germany

### Best for Christmas done properly

Christmas markets are synonymous with Germany, and not just because they also go by the name of German Christmas markets. Everything about Germany's cities is picture-perfect when it comes to a festive get together, from the snow-dusted cathedral spires and gothic architecture to the bustling crowds escaping the chill with a warming cup of Glühwein.

For one of the oldest and most famous Christmas markets in all of Germany, Nuremburg is the place to be. Historians believe it began during the early 17th century, and the traditions of old are still present to this day. Each year, a child from the city is chosen to be the cherub that leads the parade through Nuremburg's central square, and there's something undeniably warm and festive about the whole thing. The Christkindlesmarkt opens on the first weekend of December, and runs until Christmas Eve.

## New York

### Best for Christmas shopping

Throughout December, the Big Apple becomes the pinnacle of Christmas

excess. New York is full of festive things to see and do, and on every corner there's a must-visit attraction. It goes without saying that any trip to New York over Christmas absolutely has to include a visit to the Rockefeller Center to see its enormous Christmas tree. A major celebration in the city, the switching on of the Christmas tree lights draws in huge crowds of people ready to experience the festive magic, and it's one of those 'It's not Christmas until...' moments. Make this one top of your list.

When it's time to hit the shops, iconic stores like Macy's and Bloomingdale's are a shopaholic's go-to and make it oh-so-easy to part with those dollars in exchange for gifts and souvenirs. Just make sure you pack light so you've plenty of room for all those goodies on your return flight.

## The Caribbean

### Best for escaping it all

Don't worry, Christmas-phobes; we've got you covered. If the first mention of the 'C' word fills you with dread, there are plenty of places around the world to escape to. For winter sun, there's no better destination than

the Caribbean. The weather is firmly on the beach-friendly end of the thermometer, so there's definitely no need for a Christmas jumper (thank goodness). A December break to the Caribbean will see you swapping a scarf for a snorkel, swimming with dolphins instead of basting the turkey, and building sandcastles instead of snowmen. If you're a fan of Christmas but not the cold, the Caribbean is home to an array of unique festive traditions. You'll find Christmas markets in Jamaica, Juckanoo (a huge parade and colourful party) in the Bahamas, and St Lucia National Day over in – you guessed it – St Lucia. This national day is officially marked on the 13th December, but the party goes on throughout the month with feasts, sports events and lights to commemorate the 'Saint of Lights', aka St Lucia.



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# COMPETITION



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For your chance to win these tickets, visit the Core Theatre website page for this event - [www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk](http://www.thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk) - to find the answer to this question:

**Who wrote this show?**

Email your answer to: [thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk](mailto:thecoretheatre@solihull.gov.uk) –  
and please put 'Santa' as the subject line.

**Closing date for entries is 1st December. 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 one of the dates shown above.**

### **About the show:**

A festive play written especially for very young children and their families with lots of opportunities to join in, including sing-along games. The show (around 40mins) is then followed by a photo opportunity with Santa and a gift for each child.

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By Tracey Anderson

**Although its heart-breaking, sometimes the kindest option is to let your pet go.** Doing your research before the time comes may help you to come to terms with the decision.

If your dog's quality of life is suffering, with no sign of getting better, you'll want to have as long as possible with them, but you'll also want to make the best decision for them.

**A good vet will have a good insight into how your dog's health issues will affect their quality of life,** considering mobility, appetite, breathing, comfort, happiness and response to treatment, but the final decision will be yours.

**Dogs are much-loved members of the family** so the decision will be hard for

everyone, especially children – they'll be upset but focus the discussion on what is best for the dog. Reassure them it will be peaceful, with no pain for the dog. The vet administers a measured overdose of a drug which sends them into a permanent **'sleep.'** If you want to, you can cuddle your dog as they drift off.

**Afterwards, you can bury your dog in your garden** – as long as you're not renting, and some councils do place restrictions on home burials. Your dog could be buried or cremated at a pet cemetery or your vet can arrange a cremation.

**Focus on the good times** you had together, and take comfort in the fact that the decision was the best one for them.

# Help!

## I Need Somebody...

### Who do you call to help a struggling child?

If your child is struggling in school the chances are that you are struggling to figure out how to find the most effective help for them.

**There are many reasons why a child might fall behind. Some children find that despite a lot of effort, they are frustrated by learning disorders.** Some fall behind because they have a hard time focusing on learning or making an organized effort to get homework done.

Some children will get the support they need to succeed from specialists in their school, in the classroom or in sessions outside of class. But every year many parents feel that their child is not receiving adequate assistance and end up sourcing their own help.

**This is where things can get confusing.** What sort of help might be best for your child? Think carefully about your child's needs.

**Subject support** – Sometimes a child falls behind in a particular subject for an obvious reason: they were off sick for a while, or they've had a succession of supply teachers, or disrupted lessons. If your youngster is failing in one particular subject, a specialist tutor might be the way to go.

It's easy to understand what a tutor is and does: They are knowledgeable in a particular subject area and can bolster a child's success in that subject by filling in background information your child might have missed and offering deeper explanation and practice to help the student acquire the necessary skills. **These people are**



**specialists so expect to pay between £20-40 per session depending on subject and area.**

**Homework support** - If your child's challenge isn't a particular subject, but trouble settling down to tackle the work itself, a homework helper might be what you need. A homework helper provides structure and support. Many parents find themselves filling that role for their kids, being present and providing back-up when kids get confused or unfocused. But for some children who are really struggling with focus and organisation (many kids with ADHD and autism fall into this category) homework becomes a major area of conflict, so having a professional homework helper on the case can be a big relief for both parents and kids. Helping a child succeed at homework without involving parents can remove a lot of stress from the whole family's evening. The person does not have to be a specialist teacher, they do have to be good at helping a child to organise their thoughts and their time.

**Learning support** - For a child with serious learning issues, an educational therapist can work with them to strengthen the skills they need to be able to keep up. Educational therapists come to the task with a range of professional skills, from special education to speech and language therapy to psychology. What they have in common is that they will work with an individual child's learning style, and then help him develop skills and strategies that will enable him to build on strengths and compensate for weaknesses. Children with dyslexia particularly benefit from this approach.

**By Tracey Anderson**

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# Time to Veg Out!

**You may be surprised to learn that there's a charity for older vegetarians and vegans! Vegetarians for Life (VfL) was established in 2008 to promote that no-one should be forced to give up on their dietary preferences (or needs) just because they are older or go in to care.**

Birchmere House, Birchmere Mews and Knowle Gate Care Homes, operated by Avery Healthcare, are proud to be members of VfL's directory, a 1,300 strong list of veggie-friendly organisations. Three of Avery's chefs were recently crowned as winners in VfL's 2019 Awards for Excellence in Vegetarian Care Catering; they scooped Vegetarian Chef of the Year, Vegetarian/Vegan Dish of the Year and were Runners Up for the Special Recognition Award.

Amanda Woodvine, VfL Chief Executive, commented "Approaching half a million people over 65 now live in care homes, and the number of vegetarians and vegans has trebled

in five years. They and their families have understandable concerns that their dietary needs and preferences can be met, with food prepared separately to meat products, and a variety every day from a chef who takes the time to understand their needs."

The home's chefs provide first-class vegetarian and vegan options, which take into account religious and cultural dietary needs as well as resident dining preferences and awareness; many find it a lighter option to eat vegetarian, whilst others see the current topic around whether we should reduce our dependency upon meat and move towards a more vegetarian diet to support planet resource sustainability.

All three quality homes are situated in Knowle and deliver the highest standards in care and senior well-being. There are no joining fees, it's all-inclusive no matter how much care you need, rooms come fully furnished and there are sunny landscaped gardens to the rear.



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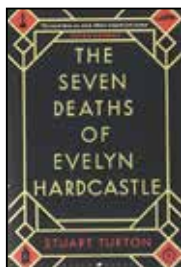


# a good read

reviews By Willow Coby

## The Seven Deaths of Evelyn Hardcastle

by Stuart Turton



Murder mystery stories have been popular for centuries. However, I would say that you have probably never come across a murder mystery story quite like this. Debut author, Stuart Turton, admits to being inspired by the novels of Agatha Christie, but this is far from the likes of Miss Marple or Hercule Poirot. Set in a large country house in the early 20th century our protagonist wakes up in the middle of a wood. He is not wearing his own clothes and he soon realises that he is not in his own body. Confused by what is going on he hears a gun shot and stumbles his way through the wood to Blackheath House. He is greeted by a man who calls him Sebastian Bell, but this name means nothing to him. Eventually he is visited by a mysterious man in a plague doctor's mask. Our protagonist is called Aidan Bishop and he has until the end of the day to solve a murder. If he fails then the day will start all over again, but this time Aidan will not be Sebastian Bell. He will live the same day over in eight different 'hosts' and so he has eight days to solve the murder of Evelyn Hardcastle. Evelyn has been murdered hundreds of times. Part Agatha Christie, part Quantum Leap, this novel will keep you guessing with plot twists appearing throughout. Oh, and expect to feel confused: Turton has done a stunning job of weaving the eight different days together. Just go with it and enjoy the journey!

## Enchanted Palace

by Rosie Banks



It is clear from the minute you look at this book who it is aimed at. A pink and sparkly cover welcomes young readers into the world of 'The Secret Kingdom'. This is the first instalment of this successful series of books that follow the adventures of best friends Ellie, Summer, and Jasmine.

As the book begins, the three friends are helping their teacher run a stall at their local jumble sale. As they are packing up, they find a strange-looking locked wooden box. Too late to sell it they take it home with them to try and open. What happens when they do shows them a world they never knew existed: The Secret Kingdom. King Merry needs their help. His wicked sister, Queen Malice is plotting to destroy the kingdom and turn it from a joyful place, full of unicorns, fairies, and mermaids, into a dull and dreary land, making everyone as miserable as she is. Can Ellie, Summer, and Jasmine, solve the riddles that will let them save the Secret Kingdom from the Queen? Join them on an adventure of a lifetime, riding on the backs of the royal swans and rainbow slides.



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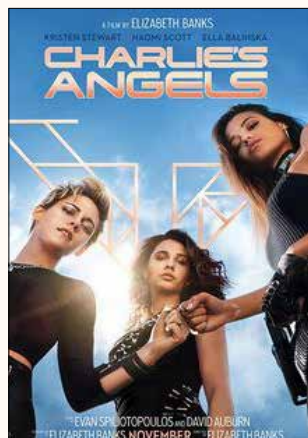
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## a taster of what's coming up...

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#### Midway

from 8 November

The Japanese raid on Pearl Harbour during the Second World War was the greatest intelligence failure in American history. But a follow-up attack was foreseen: the battle of 'Midway'. The American navy were underdogs with an undermanned fleet. Up against an overwhelmingly



powerful adversary, they fought a decisive battle that would be a turning point in the War.

#### The Good Liar

from 8 November

Career con artist Roy Courtnay can hardly believe his luck when he meets well-to-do widow Betty online. As Betty opens her home and life to him, Roy is surprised to find himself caring about her, turning what should be a cut-and-dry swindle into the most treacherous tightrope walk of his life.



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#### Twist and Shout

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### Blake

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Brit-Award-winning Blake present a new Christmas-themed uplifting show of fabulous harmonies, choir and great heart-warming songs. Inspired by the lush trio harmonies of The Three Tenors and The Bee Gees they'll perform songs like; When a Child is Born, O Holy Night, Walking in the Air, Frosty the Snowman, Silent Night and Last Christmas with an eclectic mix of classical, pop, rock and musical harmony plus their super on stage banter.



#### The Producers

19-24 November

Those of you familiar with Mel Brooks' work will know that you are in for an enormous amount of fun and laughter with The Producers! Based on the 1968 film, it follows Max and Leo's plan to make more money with a flop of a show than they ever could with a hit! With no shortage of show-stopping musical numbers, and Brooks' signature humour, brought to the stage by St Augustine's MTC, this is one musical that is sure not to be a flop!



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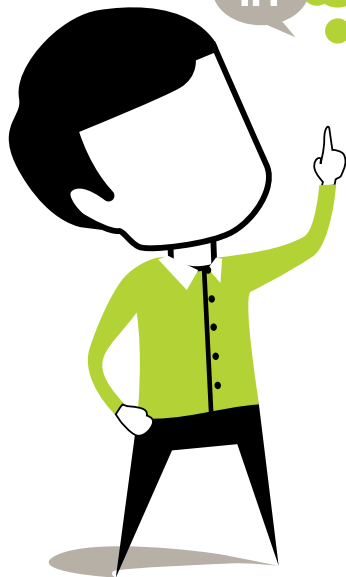
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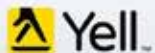
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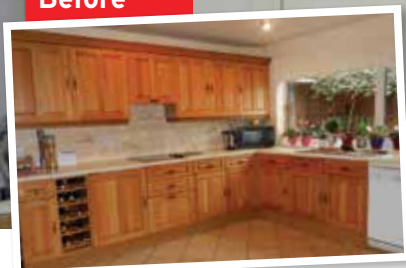
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# Parsnip Soup

**An easy luxurious autumnal soup**

**Preparation time: Less than 30 mins**

**Cooking time: 30 mins**

## Ingredients

1 tbsp olive oil  
 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped  
 600g/1lb 5oz parsnips, cut into 1cm/½-inch cubes  
 ½ tsp dried red chilli flakes, plus extra to serve  
 1 litre/1¾ pints hot vegetable stock  
 200ml/7fl oz double cream  
 salt and freshly ground black pepper  
 For the croutons  
 3 thick slices good bread, such as sourdough, cut into 2.5cm/1-inch pieces  
 1 tbsp olive oil  
 55g/2oz Gruyere cheese, finely grated

## Method

Preheat the oven to 200C/180C Fan/Gas 6. Heat the oil in a heavy-based saucepan over a medium heat. Add the chopped garlic and cubed parsnips and fry for 4–5 minutes, stirring occasionally. When they are golden add the chilli flakes and fry for one more minute.

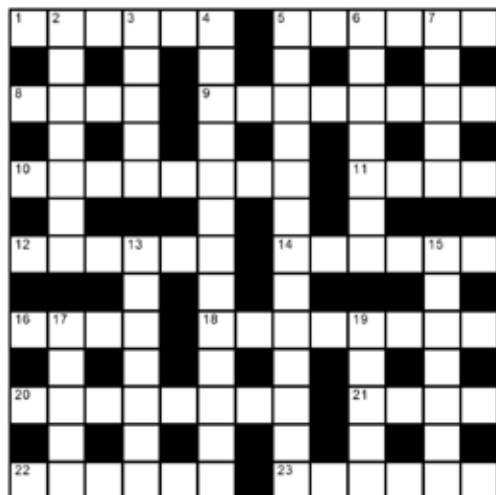
Pour in the stock, stir and bring everything to a simmer. Cover with the lid and cook for 12–15 minutes, or until the parsnips are tender.

Meanwhile, for the croutons, place the pieces of bread on a baking tray in a single layer and drizzle with the olive oil. Sprinkle over the cheese, and season with salt and pepper. Bake for 5–10 minutes until crisp and golden. Remove the soup from the heat and blitz with a stick blender until smooth. Return to the heat, stir in the cream and heat through gently. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve the soup topped with the croutons and a sprinkling of chilli flakes for a little more kick.



**Preparation time: Less than 30 mins**  
**Cooking time: 30 mins**

## crossword



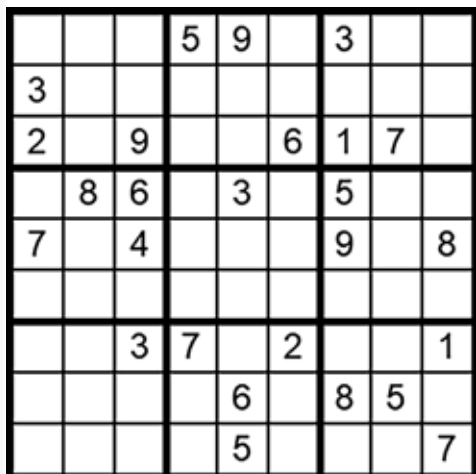
## clues

### Across

- 1 Affirms (6)
- 5 Grabbing, seizing (6)
- 8 British aristocrat (4)
- 9 Rest, break (8)
- 10 Defensive walls of a castle (8)
- 11 Part of the foot (4)
- 12 Athletic throwing event (6)
- 14 Apologise, atone (6)
- 16 Scrap, fight (4)
- 18 Members of the crow family (8)
- 20 Remove the riding seat from a horse (8)
- 21 Enclosure for chickens (4)
- 22 Pacify (6)
- 23 Arduous, irritating (6)

### Down

- 2 Giant rogue wave (7)
- 3 Bind, fasten securely (3,2)
- 4 Not at all intoxicated (5,2,1,5)
- 5 Large box filled with riches (8,5)
- 6 Thick sweet tomato sauce (7)
- 7 Female relation (5)
- 13 Small edible fruit, may be black, white or red (7)
- 15 Infant (7)
- 17 Christmas theatre show (5)
- 19 Atrophy (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.

answers on page 50

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# A Pre-nuptial Agreement offers protection

**A pre-nuptial agreement is a formal document which describes what assets each party owns at the time of the marriage. It also sets out how these assets and finances will be divided in the event of divorce or separation.**

**A**lthough couples marry in the belief that the marriage will be forever, it is an unfortunate fact that almost 50% of marriages now end in divorce and parties need to protect their financial position.

## **Pre-nuptial agreements are important where...**

- One party has or is likely to have significant inheritance prospects.
- One party has significantly greater capital or income than the other.
- One party has a successful business that they would like to keep separate from personal finances.
- One or both parties are entering into a second marriage and they wish to retain their previous divorce settlement.
- One or both parties have children from a previous marriage and they wish to protect their children's inheritance rights.

## **The court's starting point**

In deciding financial settlements, the Court's starting point is a 50/50 split of all the assets. It then considers a variety of factors in deciding whether to move from this position such as whether or not the couple have entered into any prior agreements.

## **Given significant weight by the Courts**

Although pre-nuptial agreements are not legally-binding documents, since the landmark Supreme Court case of *Radmacher v Granatino* in 2010, the courts now give significant weight to them when assessing finances.

If it can be shown that both parties freely entered into the agreement and understood the implications of signing it at the time, then as long as it is not unfair to hold the other party to the agreement the courts should uphold it. Pre-nuptial agreements must be drafted and dealt with carefully to ensure the Court have no reason not to uphold it.



**Dipika Mistry and Kathryn Ferris**  
**Wallace Robinson & Morgan Family Lawyers**

## **Saving you a lot of time and money**

A well prepared pre-nuptial agreement could save you a lot of time and money should your marriage come to an end.

If you are getting married, contact us to talk to one of our family law solicitors who can advise you as to whether such an agreement will be right for you.

## **Co-habitation Agreements**

If you are not getting married but are planning to share a home with your partner, you may want to consider a co-habitation agreement. As the law does not afford the same protection to cohabiting couples, there are a number of things which should be taken into consideration when setting up home outside of marriage, including:

- Whether the home should be held as joint tenants or tenants in common, and how the parties' contributions to the purchase price can be protected
  - Whether a life insurance policy should be taken out
  - Whether the parties need to make a Will and, if so, what provisions should be made for each other.
- Under the intestacy rules unmarried partners will not inherit upon the other's death, and so this is an important thing to consider.

The legal position regarding any children will also be affected by the fact the parents are not married. A cohabitation agreement sets out arrangements to apply both whilst the parties are living together and on the breakdown of the relationship.

#### How we can help

Wallace Robinson & Morgan Solicitors have the expertise to help draw up an appropriate agreement that both you and your partner are happy with and one that the courts will uphold.

We will make sure that both of you have obtained independent legal advice and fully understand the implications of the agreement.

We will make certain that both of you have given full and frank financial disclosure and ensure that the agreement is realistic and fair.

Our specialist family lawyers can advise you as to whether these agreements are right for you.

Head of the Family Law department, Kathryn Ferris is a qualified Collaborative Family Lawyer and offers the benefits of this revolutionary approach to her clients. Dipika Mistry, is an accredited Law Society Family Law solicitor. Kathryn and Dipika are both members of "Resolution", an organisation that promotes constructive, non-confrontational methods to resolve family issues.

**If you would like to discuss any family law issues please contact us on 0121 705 7571 or email [kathrynferis@wallacerobinson.co.uk](mailto:kathrynferis@wallacerobinson.co.uk)**



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# useful numbers

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NHS non-emergency	111
Dorridge Surgery	01564 776262
Knowle Surgery	0121 796 2777
Solihull Hospital	0121 424 2000
Spire Parkway Hospital	0845 850 1451

## Council

Solihull Council	0121 704 6000
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## Utilities

Electricity power cut	0800 6783 105
Gas leak	0800 111 9999
Severn Trent Water	024 7771 5000
Severn Trent Water (emergencies)	0800 783 4444

## Travel

National Rail Enquiries	03457 48 49 50
Network West Midlands (buses)	0345 303 6760

## LOCAL COUNCILLORS

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## local police contact for knowle & dorridge

Sergeant Mike Lloyd

Telephone: 101 ext 892 6037

Email: rural@west-midlands.pnn.police.uk



**Accountants**

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Station 01564 703 225  
39 AP Alloys 07972 852 758  
40 Johnsons Cars 01564 454 051**Care and Childcare Services**18 Home Instead 01564 330 395  
24-25 Avery 01564 732400 / 732660 / 332233  
27 Lady Katherine  
Housing 01564 772 850**Carpets**19 Steaming Sam 0121 733 6307  
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Landscapes 0121 702 1456**Estate Agents**

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17 Not Just Travel 07565 534 524

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

**Sudoku Solution**

from page 38

S	T	A	T	E	S	T	A	K	I	N	G
S	I	O	R	E	E	I					
D	U	K	E	B	R	E	A	T	H	E	R
N	U	E	A	C	C						
R	A	M	P	A	R	T	S	H	E	E	L
M		A	U	U							
D	I	S	C	U	S	R	E	P	E	N	T
		U	A	E							
S	P	A	R	J	A	C	K	D	A	W	S
A	R	U	H	E	B						
U	N	S	A	D	D	L	E	C	O	O	P
T	N	G	S	A	R						
S	O	O	T	H	E	T	R	I	N	G	

**crossword Solution**

from page 38



# Pots of cabbage!

By Rachael Leverton

**N**ovember can be a bit of a grey, miserable month. My kids would call it 'meh'. I like to inject some colour with winter bedding plants. A cheerful pot by the front door can make you smile on the gloomiest morning.

Obviously, the choice of plants for winter is not as large as during the summer months but there are enough varieties around to make very attractive combinations for pots. **My favourite plant for winter pots has to be the ornamental cabbage.**

These robust beauties come in wonderful colours including cream, pink and purple – with either attractive frilly or very spiky leaves. They pair beautifully with winter-flowering pansies and hardy cyclamen.

**Try planting three pots of different sizes using a colour scheme which co-ordinates with the cabbages.** Plant a 50cm / 20inch pot with four large ornamental frilly cabbages surrounding a central spiky one, to give some height to the display. Then choose a smaller pot (38cm / 15inches) and plant one frilly ornamental cabbage surrounded by pink and purple winter-flowering pansies. Finally plant a small pot (25cm / 10inches) with a mixture of hardy cyclamen and white pansies. The resulting display will give you pleasure through November, December and January.

## Tips

Select a frostproof container because these pots need to withstand wintery conditions. The most dependable pots are made of fibreglass, lead, iron,



heavy plastic, or stone. Most terracotta will crack in cold temperatures, but some glazed varieties are frost-proof.

**Use a good general-purpose compost.**

There are mixes specifically made for use in containers, which provide the essential drainage that plants living in pots need.

**Make sure you place plenty of drainage material in the bottom of the pots.**

A good compost will contain enough slow release fertiliser to maintain the plants for several weeks during autumn and winter. If they still going strong as winter turns to you can give them a bit of a feed, but by February or March you will want to think about replanting your pots with spring bedding.

**Think about gravel** – I like to use a layer of gravel over the soil of my winter pots for several reasons. It gives the planted pots an attractive finish, keeps rain from splashing back on to the plants, provides some insulation for the soil and reflects light and warmth in any winter sun thus creating a little microclimate in which the plants will be happier.

**Water them!** The plants will need moisture around their roots so water as needed unless the soil in the container is frozen. Do not water frozen pots because the plants are unable to absorb the water.

**Happy gardening.**

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