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Ready for christmas?

Welcome to the November edition...

By the time this arrives Christmas will only be about 6 weeks away! Check out page 42 to see what local Christmassy events are on.

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!

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



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We will remember them

Why do we wear a poppy?

Scarlet poppies grow wild all over Western Europe wherever the soil has been disturbed. The battles of the First World War churned up such vast areas of earth that millions of poppies germinated and bloomed, often around the bodies of the fallen soldiers.

A Canadian surgeon called John McRae wrote the poem In Flanders Fields in which the poppies symbolise the deaths of those who fought. It is a haunting memorial to those soldiers who have died in any war.

Why do we have a two-minute silence? It was on the eleventh hour of the eleventh

day of the eleventh month that the guns of World War I fell silent. Four years of fighting and devastation finally ended. The following year ceremonies of remembrance took place on what was known as Armistice Day.

An Australian journalist, Edward George Honey first proposed a respectful silence to remember the dead. He wrote a letter to the London Evening News which was brought to the attention of King George V. The king then issued a proclamation which called for a two-minute silence.

These days Armistice Day is known as Remembrance Sunday and is a chance to honour the fallen soldiers of all conflicts.



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Brain Benefits

ver the past few decades neuroscientists have discovered that the grey blancmange-like structure between our ears is capable of adapting, healing, rewiring and even renewing itself. What's more, we can make changes which positively impact the health of our brain, and science has given us some interesting ways to do this.

Juggling

Various studies found that volunteers who participated in a juggling exercise improved connections in areas of their brains involved in visual and motor activity. Furthermore, the changes were still present several weeks after they stopped. The researchers chose juggling becasue it's a complex skill, but other complex activities would also work, for example: salsa dancina, life-drawina or learning a musical instrument. The kev is that the new skill you choose to learn should be unrelated to what you normally do. It should take you out of your comfort zone. Tasks which involve genuine concentration, such as studying a musical instrument, playing chess, juggling, and dancing, are associated with a lower risk for dementia. Dancing, it turns out is particularly good as it is both physically and mentally challenging. Learning a new language is also good for a brain workout, causing an increase in grey matter in the areas related to the use of language.

Sleep

For those of us who love our beds it's good news; sleep is necessary for brain health. It's not such good news for people who struggle with insomnia and disrupted sleep though. Poor sleep is linked to rapid reductions in brain volume, so your brain actually

Brain health is as important as physical health

shrinks. Areas of the brain dealing with language, balance, maths and decision-making were the most affected. Poor sleep causes protein build-up in the brain, which negatively impacts brain cells. Sleep repairs and restores brain function, so improving sleep habits is important for brain health. Experts suggest between 7–8 hours per night as optimal. If you feel you aren't sleeping well it's important to talk to your doctor as underlying issues such as snoring, or high levels of anxiety, may need to be addressed.

Exercise

It's not only good for your body but it helps memory, motor skills, and learning ability. It doesn't need to be anything fancy; simply running on a treadmill or pedalling a stationary bike for 30 minutes has benefits. Exercise increases heart rate, so more oxygen is pumped to the brain, and it releases beneficial hormones too, improving mood and sleep, while reducing stress levels and anxiety. See why dancing is so brain-friendly? It ticks ALL the boxes.

Mindfulness

It's not just a fad. Science says meditation is beneficial for mental health. Our brains often function on auto-pilot. Being in the moment while going about your day and noticing any tension or preoccupations without judging is effective in combating stress. Meditation rewires your brain,

> leading to: raised happiness levels, stress reduction, increased concentration, improved working memory, decreased emotional outbursts, and better problem-solving. By taking care of your brain you can increase white and grey matter, improve mental health, and slow down cognitive decline. It's time to be brainy!

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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.

Ithough 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 legallybinding 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

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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.

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a good read reviews By Willow Coby

Me Before You by Jojo Moyes

26-year-old Lou Clark still lives with her parents in the quiet market town she grew up in. Almost deserted in the winter the town's one draw is an old castle and when we meet Lou, she works in the local tea shop serving the coach loads of tourists who come to visit. With a



quirky dress sense Lou never really feels as if she fits in and as a teenaaer lonaed to travel the world. However, circumstances meant that she could never bring herself to leave. After losing her job she reluctantly takes a job caring for Will, a young quadriplegic man injured in a motorcycle accident several years earlier. She is told the job is just for 6 months and despite a rough start she decides to stick it out and soon an unlikely bond develops between Lou and Will. A romantic novel this also deals with the sensitive issue of disability and the descriptions of Will's day to day life are well-written with brutal honesty and little sensationalism. Things take a darker turn when Lou learns the reason why her contract is only to be for 6 months and she sets out to bring Will new experiences and remind him of the simple iovs of life: not easy for a wheelchair bound man whose ideal way to pass the time before his accident was skydiving or climbing Mount Kilimanjaro. As a reader you are drawn into the lives of these characters and the development of their relationship is believable. In the hands of the wrong writer this plot line could turn out to be very twee and cliché but Moyes does not fall into this trap. The resulting novel is engaging, difficult to put down and will lead you to appreciate the small wonders of life.

The Fault in Our Stars by John Green

Continuing with the theme of personal relationships in the face of illness comes The Fault in Our Stars the hugely successful teen novel exploring the impact of teenage cancer on the lives of two individuals. 16-year-old Hazel has cancer and is, reluctantly, convinced by her parents to attend a support



group for others in her situation. Amongst the other patients there is Augustus, a 17-year-old boy who lost a leg to cancer. The two begin talking and agree to read each other's favourite books. Hazel's book is a novel by a Dutch writer about a young girl with cancer: Hazel sees many parallels to her own life here. Augustus is angry after reading the book and discovering that it doesn't have a nicely wrapped up ending. There is no conclusion, no neat package, no ending: happy or otherwise. Of course, life has an ending, but it often isn't happy or neatly wrapped up. Hazel becomes aware of her fears about aetting close to others. She is afraid that when she dies it will hurt them, and this naturally affects her relationship with Augustus. This moving novel deals with issues that most of its teen readers won't have vet faced in their lives. As a teenager you often feel immortal. You feel as if life is stretching out ahead of you and death is the furthest from your mind. Hazel and Augustus, along with the other young people at the support group view life differently. There is no expectation that everyone will make it to the next meeting. No one is immortal. With a huge teenage following and a successful movie adaptation this novel stays with you long after the closing paragraph.



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In a Pickle

hen I was a child, family get-togethers involved buffet lunches. One of the highlights

were the big jars of 'quick pickles' that my father, aunts, and uncles had been taught to make by my grandmother. Quick pickles are vegetables pickled in a solution of vinegar, water, salt and sometimes sugar, then kept in the fridge. These

are not deeply pickled onions, nor fermentation. Quick pickles taste light, fresh and crunchy.

My Grandmother pickled fresh veg from her garden during the Second World War. Veg needs to be super-fresh and undamaged. It can be cut to any shape. I like to boil green veg such as green beans and asparagus for two or three minutes then plunge them into ice cold water to preserve their bright colour, but it's optional.

To make the basic brine use equal parts light vinegar and water. By light vinegar I mean white, apple cider, white wine, or rice vinegar. Don't use pickling vinegars or balsamic. To the brine add whatever spices you like. Dill seed, chilli flakes and garlic are nice. Coriander, ginger, turmeric, and thyme work with carrots. Classic combinations include green beans with garlic and fresh dill, and cherry tomatoes with black peppercorns and garlic. We grew some squash this year and quick pickled some of the little ones with onion and garlic.

Wide-mouth large jars are the best containers. Wash them and their lids, and rings in warm, soapy water and rinse thoroughly. Allow to dry completely.

Wash and dry the vegetables then prep them. Peel any carrots, trim the end of beans etc. Cut vegetables into evenly sized pieces.

Add any flavourings to the jars. You can choose



Quick pickling is the new big thing in the kitchen

different flavours for each vegetable jar. Pack the vegetables as tightly into the jars as you can without damaging them, leaving a couple

> of centimetres space at the top. To make the brine, place the vinegar, water, salt, and any sugar into a small saucepan. Heat on high to bring to the boil. Stir to dissolve the salt and sugar. Pour the hot brine over the vegetables, filling each jar to within 2cm of the top. You'll

get better at judging how much brine to make as you repeat the process. Gently tap the jars against the counter a few times to remove all the air bubbles. Top up with more brine if needed. Seal the jars tightly. Cool to room temperature and then refrigerate for at least 48 hours. The pickles improve with flavour as they age. They can be stored in the fridge for about 2 months.

Flavours for Quick Pickles

Fresh herbs: dill, thyme, oregano, and rosemary hold up well Dried herbs: thyme, dill, rosemary, oregano, or marjoram Garlic cloves: smashed for mild garlic flavour, or sliced for stronger garlic flavour Fresh ginger: peeled and thinly sliced Whole spices: mustard seed, coriander, peppercorns, red pepper flakes, chilli flakes Ground spices: turmeric or smoked paprika are great for both colour and flavour

Vegetables for Pickling

Cucumbers, summer squash, ginger, red onion - thinly sliced Carrots- Peel - cut into batons or rounds Green beans, asparagus - blanch to preserve colour Cherry tomatoes - pickle whole

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The Coding Conundrum How to get kids learning to code

hen my son Lee started secondary school this year, the subject he was most looking forward to studying was computer science. He wants to learn to code and create his own programs. But a few weeks in and he was starting to lose enthusiasm.

The problem is that he hasn't yet touched a computer, only partly because of COVID safety procedures. They learn about programming and how computers work, but it's all on paper without a single line of code. I looked at his syllabus and frankly it's not going to get much better for several months! phone. How do we harness that and create the next generation of coders?

Learning is currently going through big changes thanks to the pandemic. We can't rely on having kids in a classroom with their teacher for the whole of a term at the moment because of various year groups or members of a bubble needing to self-isolate. But online learning opens up an almost infinite number of options for students. Web sites like Udemy or Coursera offer high-quality, welltaught courses in a vast range of topics.

For Lee I found a Udemy course, tailored to his age range that taught coding through designing and building games (I've included

Computer science courses at school talk about computers much more than they talk about programming. Kids desperate to code become frustrated and switch off from the subject. Fewer children in the UK are now progressing to become



the web address below). It teaches Python, the same programming language that he'll use at school, and indeed the one most schools use. All the lessons are video, so there's no reading long documents. Coding starts as soon as the programming software (which is free!) is installed. He can go at his own pace, take lessons

computer programmers. That's unfortunate when it's one of the most sought after skills in today's workforce.

There is a shortage of specialist computer science teachers. Most computer programmers work in industry, where salaries are higher. So children are taught by nonspecialists who mostly do not have a software engineering background. Hence the syllabus becomes weighted to teaching general computing rather than coding.

How do we turn kids on to coding?

Most want to create the next top selling computer games, or a killer app for their

whenever he wants, and replay explanations as many times as he wants until he fully understands. Personal help is just a few clicks away. Send a message and an answer comes back in about a day or so from the actual tutor. It's just like having a private computer science teacher at a fraction of the cost - less than the cost of a single tutor session in fact!

So how's he doing?

The enthusiasm is back. He's blasting through the lessons and loving it. At this rate he'll finish the course this term which will take him to GCSE coding standard in just a few months. After that the sky's the limit.
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Your Guide To The Canary Islands

The Canary Islands are 7 islands in the Atlantic Ocean where the sun shines yearround, with temperatures averaging 19°C in the winter. As one of the most biodiverse geographical locations in the world, you'll find a wide range of different landscapes; dunes, forests, volcanoes, starry skies and beaches, and the islands all have their own micro-climates ranging from very wet to very dry.

IN THE KNOW

Flight Time: Approximately 4-5 hours from the UK Currency: Euros Language: Spanish Weather: Year-round sun ranging from 19°C - 28°C Time Difference: GMT Resort Islands: 7

Tenerife

In Tenerife, anything is possible every day of the year thanks to its climate, natural attributions and tourist infrastructure designed for fun for all the family. It's the island of a thousand experiences and the most popular of the 7 islands. Spend your days relaxing on the beach, hiking Mount Teide, watching a show, walk around the marina or have fun at a theme park. Sit back on a restaurant's terrace and take in the views as you dine on some of the most. Take on Siam Park, Europe's largest water park and the race the family down water slides up to 28 metres high and take in the lush tropical vegetation and

incredible features modelled on Thai architecture.



Gran Canaria

A small continent where you'll find plenty of experiences to make every day count; golden beaches, incredible landscapes and a city with an infinite number of things to do! Gran Canaria has been honoured with the title of a World Biosphere Reserve by UNESCO thanks to its volcanic landscapes, extensive pine forests and Macaronesian flora. A perfect family destination with nearly 60km of beaches, the ability to sail out to watch wales, visit its museums or just relax on one of its many beaches. The dunes of Maspalomas change constantly as they are moulded by the winds, and are one of the top attractions for people to explore.

Lanzarote

A mix of black and reddish rocks along with a tranquil atmosphere, make this island feel like a different world! The Timanfaya National Park delivers spectacular views in the Canary Islands and is well worth a visit. The islands long, sunny days mean people flock from all over Europe for cycling, swimming and most famously, for the watersports. Whether you're a seasoned pro or a beginner, there's plenty of places to head out on the water and brush up on your watersports. Another great way to get to know the island is visit its wineries and try their delicious Malvasia wine, it's that special they have their own Designation of Origin.

Fuerteventura

Discover pristine coastlines and over 150km of white sand beaches where you can watch sunny days go by. Grab a board and head out on the water. or take a stroll through one of its quaint villages and soak up the local culture. Corralejo Natural Park delivers 9km of big beaches and small coves. making it an idyllic retreat for the day. Check out one of the island's cheeseries, and try one of its Designation of Origin Majorero cheeses! Intense wind and waves up to 2metres has created a long tradition of windsurfing and kite surfing on the island.

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useful info

local events

Please note: in these uncertain times it's worth checking these events are still running before you turn up.

Sunday lunch with Santa

Sundays from 29 November - 20 December Hogarth's Hotel, Dorridge

Meet and greet with Santa and enjoy a 3-course meal. Sittings at 12pm, 1:30pm and 3pm. Children will eat smaller portions of the main menu or an alternative menu is available on request. £30 adults, £22 children under 10. Call 01564 779988 to book.

Soihull's Jingle Bell Jog

13 December Solihull Town Centre

Spread plenty of festive cheer this December by donning a Santa suit and completing the Jingle Bell Jog - a 2.5km fun run through Solihull town centre. Run, walk, dance, jog or jingle your way around the course and don't worry about the training, this festive run is about dressing up and coming together with friends and family. For more information call 0121 285 1370.

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Christmas Vintage, Craft and Gift Fayre

13 December, 1-4pm Arden Hotel, Coventry Road, Bickenhill, Solihull

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Solihull Festive Feast 18 - 22 December

Mel Square, Solihull

Shoppers will be treated to flavours from around the world with a wide range of hot foods to sample and cold items to take home for that Christmas pantry to share with their nearest and dearest. When you think of Christmas, think of Solihull this festive season as the town centre embraces the festive feel in the run-up to the big day.



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recipe time

Preparation time: 15 minutes Cooking time: 50 minutes + 10 minutes resting time. Serves: 4-6

Jambalaya

Ingredients

1/2 tsp white peppercorns 1/2 tsp black peppercorns 1 tsp paprika 1 tsp cayenne (or more if using a verv mild sausaae) 1 tsp dried thyme 2 bay leaves $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp salt 2 tbsp neutral oil 2 smoked pork sausages, ideally andouille, but fresh Polish smoked sausages, smoked chorizo or Toulouse would also do, cut into thick slices 4 bone-in chicken thiahs 1 onion, finely chopped 1 red pepper, finely chopped 1 celery stick, finely chopped 4 spring onions, chopped, green and white parts separated 3 garlic cloves, crushed 800ml chicken or pork stock 1 tsp Tabasco or other hot sauce, plus extra to serve 300g long grain rice 300g large raw prawns

Method

Turn the heat to high and in a small dry pan toast the peppercorns, paprika and cayenne. Grind them in a pestle and mortar until smooth. Add the thyme, bay leaves and salt then set one side.

Lower the heat to medium and heat the oil in a lidded frying pan. Add the sausage slices and cook until golden. Remove to drain on kitchen paper. Add the chicken and cook until golden brown, remove and place with the sausage.

Add the onion, green pepper, the white parts of the spring onions, and garlic to the pan. Cook until soft and translucent, then stir in the spice mix and cook for another couple of minutes. Return the chicken back into the pan and pour stock and Tabasco over everything.

Lower the heat to allow the mixture to simmer for about 15 minutes until the chicken is tender. Stir in the rice and simmer for a further 10 minutes. Stir everything once then cover with a tight lid, reduce the heat and steam gently for 15 minutes. Remove the chicken. Add the prawns and sausage, stir again, then replace the lid and leave to rest for 10 minutes.

Meanwhile, shred the chicken then fold into the rested jambalaya, season to taste with salt and more Tabasco. Garnish with the spring onion greens

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crossword



Down

- 2 Can be changed (9)
- 3 Tiredness (7)
- 4 Go over information again (5)
- 5 Bye! (7)

answer on page 53

- Attempt again (5)
 Large flightless bird (3)
- 7 Large Highliess bird (5
- 12 Plot of land for growing veg (9)
- 14 Item of warm underwear! (7)

clues

Across

- 1 Fifty percent (4)
- 4 Happened again (8)
- 8 Immobile (6)
- 9 ______ to help out! (3,3)
- 10 Medicine (4)
- 11 Goodies given to guests at the end of birthday celebrations (5,3)
- 13 Unpleasant (13)
- 16 Saviours (8)
- 19 Curse (4)
- 20 Guarantee (6)
- 22 Inclined the head (6)
- 23 Weirdos (8)
- 24 Information (4)
 - 15 Steered clear of (7)
 - 17 Scale (5)
 - 18 Ballads (5)
 - 21 Craze (3)



how to play SUCOKU

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

Rhubarb rhubarb

hubarb is a reasonably easy trouble-free plant to grow. It is also a handsome plant, with large leaves and striking red stems, and who doesn't love a rhubarb crumble? The trick is to choose the right spot. Ideally it needs to be planted in full sun but if your garden is very sheltered it will tolerate partial shade. Don't plant it anywhere where it might be in the way, disturbed, or need to be moved from. Rhubarb has an extensive root system and prefers to stay put, for at least a decade, so give careful thought to the spot.

Rhubarb dislikes wet soil, so make sure it's welldrained. Dig in plenty of organic matter a month or so before planting. It's generally easier and more productive to grow rhubarb from crowns (divided plants) rather than seed, and from now until Christmas is the perfect time to plant.

Dig a hole a little wider than the rhubarb crown in your prepared ground. Plant so that the growing tip is about an inch /2.5 cm below the surface. Firm the soil well around the roots to removed air pockets. Water well and mulch with organic matter, avoiding the growing tip.

During the growing season keep the area around the plant free of weeds and give an occasional good soaking in prolonged dry periods. Remove any flower heads that appear in the spring. Flowering will weaken the stems. If the crown rots, your soil was too wet, but following all the advice I've given earlier should prevent this happening! Harvest time is May until July, but rhubarb is a long-term investment so don't harvest it during the first year. It needs that full first year of growth to establish a strong root system. Second year leave at least five strong stems when you harvest. After that you can leave three or four stems each time. You should get 2-3 crops per season.



Remove only the largest stems when picking and wait till the leaves have fully opened. Pull gently from the base with a slight twist. The leaves are poisonous but can be safely composted.

Once your rhubarb is established you might want to try a forced crop for sweeter more tender stems. Rhubarb is forced by growing it in the absence of light in a microclimate slightly warmer than the outside temperature. You can start forcing in January for best results. Remove dead leaves and weeds from around the crown and add a layer of straw or shredded paper to warm the emerging shoots and to protect them from frost. Then cover the crown with an upturned dustbin or large crock pot to cut out all the light. The rhubarb should be ready for harvesting 8 weeks later. Happy gardening.



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1	7	3	2	4	6	5	8	9

Suduko Solution from page 48



crossword Solution from page 48



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