march 2023

the shirley index

a community magazine and business directory
for residents of shirley

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Welcome to the March edition

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

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

Don't forget Mothers' Day on Sunday 19th March – even if you don't take her out for a slap-up meal you can tell her how much she means to you!

Zoe Reece
Tel: 07557 220585
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community events

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15 April, Nailcote Hall

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Insomnia Gaming Festival

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The Commitments

24-29 April, Birmingham Hippodrome

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The Reggae Shed

29 April, Shirley British Legion

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COMPETITIONS

Win a sparkling afternoon tea for 4 people*

To celebrate the launch of their new afternoon tea, the Crowne Plaza in Solihull are giving one lucky winner the chance to enjoy a sparkling afternoon tea for 4 people in the Terrace restaurant or on the lakeside terrace. This prize, worth £99.80, includes a traditional selection of elegant finger sandwiches, a selection of sweet treats, a chilled glass of prosecco, as well as unlimited tea or a coffee of your choice.

Win 2 tickets to see 'Music & Comedy with Keith Slater & Christopher Gee'

You could win 2 tickets for this matinee performance at 2pm on Tuesday 16th May at the Core Theatre Solihull. Multi-instrumentalist and singer Keith Slater joins forces with TV comedy impressionist Christopher Gee for a comedy and music spectacular! This amusing musical matinee show will showcase some of the best music from the sixties onwards, plus feature TV impressionist Christophers comedy routine.

How to enter

For your chance to win, email zoe@dorridgedirectory.com with the subject line Afternoon Tea or Music & Comedy (or both) 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 1 April 2023. There is no cash value nor exchange for these prizes.

**The afternoon tea must be taken before 30th June 2023, must be used in one visit, and is valid at Crowne Plaza Solihull only and not transferable to any other hotels. If you do not wish for Crowne Plaza Solihull to contact you by email please state this in your entry email.*

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Garlic and Herb Prawns

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Preparation time: 25 minutes + marinating time
Cooking Time: 5-6 minutes
Serves: 2

Ingredients

12 Raw prawns in their shells
Juice of half a lemon
2 Garlic cloves - crushed
3 tbsp Chopped fresh flat-leaf parsley
1 tbsp chopped fresh dill
3 tbsp softened butter
Salt and pepper

Method

Rinse the prawns. Use a sharp knife to slice along the back of each prawn from head end to tail and remove the thin black intestine.
Mix the lemon juice with the garlic, herbs and butter to form a paste. Season well with salt and pepper and spread the paste over the prawns. Leave to marinate for 30 minutes.
Preheat a frying pan. Fry the prawns until cooked, tossing them several times to distribute the heat evenly.
Turn out on to warm plates and drizzle with the juices from the pan.
Serve with lemon wedges and crusty bread..

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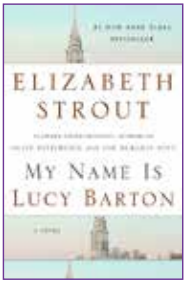
a good read By Natasha Donovan

My Name is Lucy Barton
by Elizabeth Strout



It's Mothers' Day this month and in spite of all the saccharine cards in the shops we know that mother and daughter relationships are often not straightforward. Lucy Barton is both a mother and a daughter. She has a floundering marriage and is in hospital with complications following what should have been a routine operation. Her husband who dislikes hospitals and declines to visit, arranges instead for her estranged mother to sit with her.

Strout's novel is about a mother and daughter relationship steeped in sadness. Lucy spent her childhood craving maternal love, while her mother seemed incapable of providing it.

This poignant and deeply moving novel explores the complexities of family, love, and forgiveness. Told from Lucy's viewpoint, the story takes us on a journey through her childhood and into adult life, as she reflects on events in her past and her relationship with her mother.

The novel is written in a simple and straightforward style that somehow belies the emotional depth of the story. Strout's writing is evocative and powerful; she's a master of capturing the nuances of human emotion. The characters and their relationships are richly drawn, and relatable. Lucy's relationship with her mother is at the core of the novel, and Strout explores its dynamics with sensitivity and insight.

Themes of family, love, and forgiveness are woven throughout and Strout's writing reflects on the passage of time, the power of memory and the strength of the human spirit. There is much in this novel that is not stated explicitly. The reader is left to do some work and the result is a wise, thought-provoking book.

The Invisible String
by Patricia Karst, illustrated by Joanne Lew-Vriethoff

The Invisible String is a charming children's book that teaches about the bonds of love and connection that exist between all people. The story tells of two siblings who learn about the "invisible string" that connects everyone to everyone else, and how this connection can bring comfort and reassurance during difficult times.

Joanne Lew-Vriethoff's colourful illustrations, perfectly capture the warmth and love that the story conveys. The text is simple and easy to understand, making it perfect for very young children. The message of the book is one of hope and reassurance, and it would be a valuable tool for parents and caregivers to help children understand the concept of connection and the importance of loving support network.

The Invisible String is delightful and uplifting, and will resonate with readers of all ages. It is a perfect addition to any child's library, and will be read and enjoyed for years to come.

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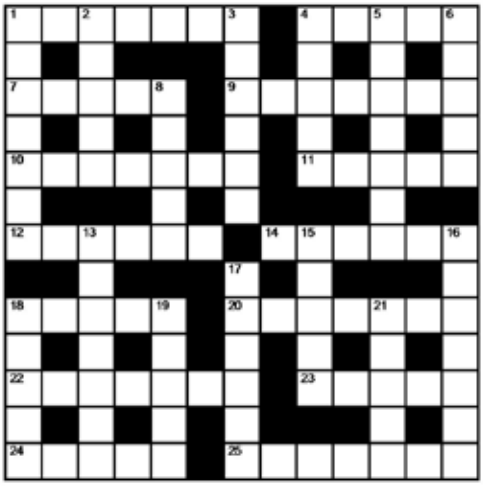
crossword



clues

Across

1 Nightclub entertainment (7)
4 Strange and frightening (5)
7 System for detecting aircraft (5)
9 Vertical, erect (7)
10 Passivity, paralysis (7)
11 Emperor, king, monarch (5)
12 Tyrannical dictator (6)
14 Priest or religious leader (6)
18 Plentiful (5)
20 Gaunt, exhausted (7)
22 Scottish pouch worn with a kilt (7)
23 Ceremonial headdress (5)
24 Item in a diary, or notebook (5)
25 Spiny Australian egg-laying mammal! (7)

Down

1 Supported, sustained (7)
2 Decorative breast pin (5)
3 Tropical bird with large colourful beak (6)
4 Mistake (5)
5 Constant, uniform (7)
6 Go inside (5)
8 Relative size of two values (5)
13 Assist financially (7)
15 Strict reason (5)
16 Intricate musical solo (7)
17 Become different (6)
18 Passage in supermarket (5)
19 Before the expected time (5)
21 Keep away from (5)

answer on page 22

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

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 22

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Delightful dahlias

I'm a fairly recent convert to the delights of the Dahlia. When I first began gardening seriously, I considered them a bit vulgar and blousy…not to mention needy. Then I saw a fantastic display in my friend's garden and in a Damascene moment I suddenly saw the light, and I've been growing them ever since. With just a little know-how, they are actually easy to grow and care for.

When choosing Dahlias consider the size and type of flower head you want, as well as the height of the plant. Dwarf varieties are great for patio pots, but there are also varieties tall enough be used as a centrepiece in a border. They are planted as tubers right about now. Look for strong, healthy tubers and check the labels carefully to make sure they are suitable for your climate and soil type. They should be planted after the last frost, in a well-drained, fertile soil in full sun. By well-drained I mean soil which allows water to percolate through it reasonably quickly and not pool. If your soil is too heavy, or alternatively too free draining (so nutrients wash away), the best remedy is to dig in lots of organic matter such as compost, well-rotted farm manure, or shredded leaves This will condition the soil so it maintains the right amounts of water and air for better plant growth and increased biological activity

Dig a hole about 10-15cm deep and position the tuber, with the eye (the little dip) facing upward, then cover with soil. Water well and mulch around the base of the plant to conserve moisture and suppress weeds.

Dahlias are quite thirsty plants so require regular watering, especially during dry spells, and they should be fed every two weeks with a high-potash fertilizer. Pinch out the growing tips to encourage bushier growth and more flowers. Stake tall varieties to prevent them from falling over in windy weather. This sounds needy but they will repay this attention handsomely with their glorious blooms. Deadhead by removing the faded blooms regularly to encourage even more flowers. Cut the stem back to just above the next pair of leaves.

Unfortunately, Dahlias are not frost-hardy, so it's important to lift the tubers in the fall before the first frost and store them in a cool, dry place. Leave the stems and foliage to die back, then carefully lift the tubers,

brushing off any soil, and let them dry out for a few days. Store them in a frost-free place, such as a shed or garage, until the spring when you can plant them out again.

My absolute favourite is Dahlia 'Chimborazo' which is a pretty collarette dahlia, bearing deep crimson-red outer petals around an inner collar of pale yellow. It is about a metre tall so will need to be staked and is suited to growing in a mixed, herbaceous border. It also makes an excellent cut flower.

If you are after a dwarf plant try 'Figaro' which is a dwarf "landscape" dahlia with semi-double flowers in shades of red, pink, orange, yellow, and white. It works well as bedding and in containers, and blooms from planting time until the first frosts.

Meditation Benefits

Meditation has associations with monks, hippies and bearded gurus.

But meditation is a mental and physical practice that has been around for thousands of years. It has its origins in ancient spiritual and philosophical traditions. In recent years, the benefits of meditation have been increasingly recognized and studied by the scientific community, leading to a growing understanding of its impact on mental and physical health.

Stress reduction: One of the most significant benefits of meditation is its ability to reduce stress and anxiety levels. When practicing meditation, individuals are taught to focus their thoughts and become present in the moment, which can help to decrease feelings of stress and worry. Regular meditation has also been found to lower cortisol levels, the hormone associated with stress, thereby reducing its negative effects on the body.

Improved emotional regulation: Meditation can help individuals develop better emotional regulation by providing a space for introspection and self-reflection. This can lead to improved emotional resilience and a greater ability to manage and respond to negative feelings and thoughts.

Increased self-awareness: By practicing mindfulness and self-reflection, we can develop a deeper understanding of our thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. This increased self-awareness can help us identify and address negative thought patterns, which can improve mental health and overall well-being.

Better sleep: Meditation has been found to have a positive impact on sleep quality, helping individuals fall asleep faster and stay asleep for longer. This improved sleep can have a significant impact on mental health, reducing symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress.

Improved cognitive function: Research has shown that meditation can help improve cognitive function, including memory, attention, and concentration. This can have a positive impact on work performance, academic performance, and daily life.

Physical health benefits: In addition to its mental health benefits, meditation has also been found to have physical health benefits. Regular meditation has been associated with improved immune function, reduced blood pressure, and decreased inflammation, all of which can help reduce the risk of chronic illness.

Increased happiness: Regular meditation has been found to increase feelings of happiness, contentment, and well-being. This is believed to be due to its impact on brain function, including increased activity in areas associated with positive emotions and decreased activity in areas associated with negative emotions.

Meditation has a wide range of benefits for both mental and physical health. From reducing stress and improving emotional regulation to improving sleep and physical health, meditation is a simple and effective tool for improving overall well-being. Whether practiced in a quiet space at home or in a group setting, meditation is a valuable addition to any self-care routine.

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local police contact for Shirley

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Crossword Solution
from page 17

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

Suduko Solution
from page 17

LOCAL COUNCILLORS

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