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Boo!

Welcome to the October edition.

As soon as October hits we all start thinking about Christmas. But there's Halloween and Bonfire Night to enjoy first. Check out page 6 to see what you can do to get into the seasonal spirit and make the most of your time now that the nights are longer and colder.

With Christmas approaching, it's a time of year many of us set deadlines – we want the extension finished by then, the carpets professionally cleaned, the gutters cleared... whatever you need help with there are a range of local professionals who advertise in this magazine who are ready and willing to help.



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community events

Hatton Pumpkin Spooktacular

22-30 October, Hatton Adventure World

October half term is set to be a scream when the Hatton Pumpkin Spooktacular returns. The popular Warwickshire family attraction will once again be awash with ghosts, ghouls, cobwebs, and pumpkins! Tickets from adventure.hattonworld.com

Elf The Musical

1-5 November, The Core Theatre Solihull

Based on the beloved holiday film, this hilarious fish-out-of-water comedy follows Buddy the Elf in his quest to find his true identity. This modern-day holiday classic is sure to make everyone embrace their inner elf. After all, the best way to spread Christmas cheer is singing loud for all



to hear. Tickets available at thecoretheatresolihull.co.uk

Solihull Round Table Fireworks

5 November, 4.30-9pm, Tudor Grange Park

With tickets starting from just £2 where else can you find such a value for money, professional fireworks display? Tickets are available from www2.theticketsellers.co.uk/

Simply Red Tribute Night

26 November, Shirley British Legion

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24-27 November, NEC

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Christmas is a Coming

Sorry to mention this but Christmas is right around the corner. Get ahead of the game with our pre-Christmas-season checklist.

Clear out the food cupboards Make room for festive goodies. Throw out all out-of-date items and things you know will never be eaten, even in a zombie apocalypse.

Clear out the toy cupboards Encourage your children to sort out toys they no longer play with and donate them to charity. It not only makes space for Christmas gifts, but it will also hopefully teach them compassion.

Order meat early Farmers' markets and shops are always packed out by the first week in December.

Puddings and cakes These need to be made early to give them time to

mature. Stir up Sunday is traditionally the time when Christmas puddings are made. It's the last Sunday before advent and this year it's on November 20th.

Write any cards and annual letters It's less of a chore than it used to be as more people eschew cards in favour of e-cards or texting, but for many people a card with a brief personal message is a welcome arrival in the post. If you get a few written every week in November then come December you can relax and feel virtuous.

Check guest lists It's worth checking who might be planning to spend Christmas with you well in advance so you can be prepared. Don't forget to ask whether anyone is vegetarian, vegan or has any allergies or intolerances. Forewarned is forearmed!

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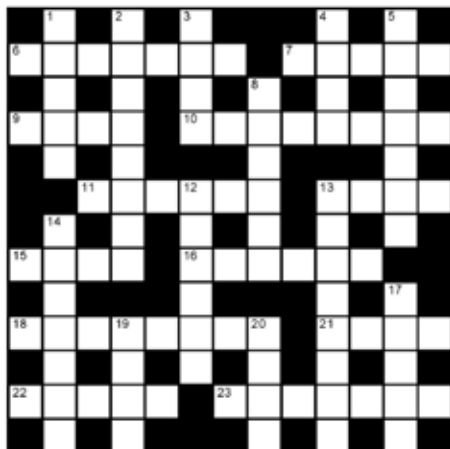


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crossword



Down

- 1 Last, ultimate (5)
 2 Ill health (8)
 3 Water, air or oil ____ (4)
 4 Flat circular object (4)
 5 Wrap around (7)

- 8 One of the seven dwarves (6)
 12 Successful or dominant person [informal] (3,3)
 13 Building material (8)

- 14 Brought back to health (7)
 17 Mass gathering to support a cause (5)
 19 Every one (4)
 20 Bound, printed work (4)

clues

Across

- 6 Small multi passenger vehicle (7)
 7 Musical instrument with 88 keys (5)
 9 Ground dwelling songbird (4)
 10 Sudden uncontrolled fear (8)
 11 Be quietly furious (6)
 13 Effortlessly charismatic (4)
 15 Short pins used to secure a tent (4)
 16 Furtive enquiring (6)
 18 Attack by swooping down toward a target. (4-4)
 21 Street (4)
 22 Burp (5)
 23 Cold and unfriendly (7)

answer on page 26



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 26

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Mindbenders

Can you find the hidden phrases?



Dutch

Blonde Hamlet

answers on page 26

Moist Orange Cake

Preparation time: 30 mins

Cooking time: 50-60 mins plus cooling time

Serves: 8

Ingredients

3 eggs

250g caster sugar

275g plain flour

2 ½ tsp baking powder

100g butter, softened

100g plain Greek yogurt or sour cream.

1 large orange, about washed and cut into pieces with the rind, but remove the seeds

1 tsp vanilla extract

Glaze

Juice of one large orange

100g caster sugar

IMPORTANT:

Food processor or blender required

Method

Preheat oven to 175°C

Prepare an 8 inch / 21cm springform pan by spraying the sides with sunflower oil or butter and lining the base with greaseproof paper.

Place the sugar and eggs in a large bowl and beat with a mixer until light and fluffy and increased in volume. Sift the baking powder and flour together then add to the mixture in the bowl a little at a time along with the



softened butter. Continue to mix until completely blended, then stir in the yogurt or sour cream. In a food processor or blender, process the whole orange until it is almost pureed.

Add this blended orange to the cake mixture along with the vanilla extract and stir until evenly combined, then pour the batter into the prepared tin. Bake for 50-60 minutes depending on your oven. The cake is ready when

a skewer inserted into the centre comes out clean. Allow to cool for about 15 minutes, then remove the side of the springform pan. Make the orange glaze

Prepare the glaze by heating the sugar and the orange juice in a saucepan, and allow to simmer for a few minutes, until the liquid has a syrupy consistency. Skewer the top of the a few times, then spoon and brush over the top of the cake and allow to cool completely before cutting.



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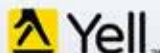
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Heating Horror

You don't need me to tell you that the cost of fuel is truly frightening at the moment. Gas bills have soared, and people are genuinely frightened to heat their homes. We don't know how long this situation will last; most of us are not eligible for Government help, and those that are eligible are most likely not going to receive enough. So, what should we do?

Well, as my late father used to say, 'We are where we are.' In other words, we have to work with the tools we have.

For years during cold winters old people have been urged to 'Prioritise one room, keep that heated and live in that space.' I'm ashamed to say that I never considered how patronising and Victorian that was until I started to read that same advice being applied to families and young people. Most people can't live in just one room. But we are where we are, and it makes sense to look at our living spaces to see if we can make more use of one particular area and prioritise heating that.

If you have a south-facing room, it's a good place to start. South-facing rooms get the sun all day so stay naturally warmer. If you don't have a south-facing room, choose an east-facing one for morning sun or west for the evening sun. North-facing rooms unfortunately will get no benefit from the sun.

Keeping warm air in and cold air out is crucial (and blindingly obvious). Seal leaks around windows and doors using caulk or weather stripping. Duct tape and clear plastic sheets make good DIY double glazing. I used it in my freezing room during my student years to great effect. Clear lets sunshine in through the windows, which helps warm the room and obviously means you don't need to turn on a light.

Desperate times

Draft excluders can be made for free or very cheaply from old tights or trousers stuffed with newspaper or other old tights. Rolled towels and blankets also work well.

Don't forget to look for subtle leaks. To do this use a candle. Move it slowly around problem spots like windows. If you see the flame flicker it's a sign that you have a leak.

Portable electric space heaters or halogen heaters can be a good investment. The cheap ones heat a space quickly but don't have an automatic cut off. More advanced ones have timers and / or temperature sensors which switch the heater off when the room reaches the required temperature. These appliances heat only the space you are using so they



are more economical than heating the whole house. Never leave them switched on unattended, or while you are sleeping.

One family I know decided that camping in their own home is the best option for staying warm. They set up their tent and sleeping bags and sleep together in one room.

As I type this another price rise is coming and people are scared about how they will cope. Writing about camping in your own front room and seeking south-facing spaces would have seemed ridiculous just 12 months ago, yet we are where we are.

Wishing you warmth and safety wherever you are.

Seasons of mist...

...and mellow fruitfulness, states the first line of the famous Keats poem. There is something rather lovely about autumn. The days are cooler but often sunny, yet the ground is more moist and so easier to dig. It's the perfect time of year for gardening.

It's tempting to tidy up all the browning plant stems but try not to get carried away. Leave some standing because they provide important habitats for wildlife. I do harvest a few seedheads each year: poppies, nigella, and alliums are my favourites. I cut them, leaving their long stems intact and put the heads inside a paper bag, then hang

the bunches inside to dry. The ripe seeds fall into the bag and can be labelled and kept for sowing next year's free plants! The decorative heads look nice in a vase too.

My neighbour (who is retired) makes fabulous leaf mould in meshed cages he's constructed himself. I take a 'busy mum' approach to fallen leaves. I run them over with a mower then rake the resulting confetti off my lawn into the flower beds and borders and let them rot naturally. They soon break down and are incorporated into the soil by worms. I still hanker after my own leaf mould crates though.

If you planted any perennials a few years ago they might need to be divided. Take a look at your plants. If they are dying off in the middle but have good growth around the edges, it's time to lift and divide. Dig up the root ball of the plant, brush and pull off excess soil and set on to a plastic ground sheet. Pull (or use a garden fork to prise) apart the football into three or four clumps, each with a section of healthy shoots and roots. Replant the 'new' plants elsewhere in the garden or try swapping plants with friends. Don't forget to keep them well-watered until they have become established.

If you feel that your garden needs a little more colour heading into winter add a couple of dogwood shrubs into your borders. There are striking red and yellow varieties available. You can also plant sedum, Japanese anemones (*Liriope*) and Michaelmas daisies (*Aster*). These flower well into late autumn and early winter.

Finally, a little planning for next year goes a long way. October is the perfect time to plant daffodil, crocus, hyacinth and allium bulbs for next spring.

Happy gardening.



COMPETITION

Win 2 tickets to see the film screening of The Railway Children Return

at **Solihull's Core Theatre**
on **Saturday 26th November at 2pm**



For your chance to win these tickets, email zoe@dorridgedirectory.com with the subject line The Railway Children and you will be added to our database to receive our monthly e-newsletter about offers and events in Solihull.

**Closing date for entries is
7th November 2022.**

The winner will be 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 the date shown above.

Picking up nearly forty years after the events of the original film, 'The Railway Children Return' will take audiences on an exciting and heart-warming journey, in which a new group of children are evacuated to a Yorkshire village during World War 2

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a good read

By Natasha Donovan

The Crow Road

Iain Banks

'He's away the crow road.'

So says Prentice McHoan's grandmother before she too takes that path. I'm not sure why I'd never read Iain Banks before. If I'm brutally honest, I think I was put off by the monotone covers.

It's not a great reason

and it did drive home

the point that you really

can't judge a book this way! I picked up *The Crow Road* to read on a short break and I've

been steadily devouring Banks' work since.

If the cover didn't attract me then the opening line did: 'It was the day my grandmother

exploded.' In the aforementioned Prentice, it has an engaging, honest, and endearing hero,

and in his family it has a complex, disturbing and fascinating cast of characters. There

is drama, humour, mystery, and philosophy in equal measure. What's not to love?

The central strand of the story is the

disappearance of Prentice's Uncle Rory –

presumed dead by many, but presumed alive by Prentice's father, Kenneth. Rory's unfinished

papers include the idea of 'Crow Road' – a novel? a factual account? Nothing is clear. As

Prentice attempts to unravel the thread, Banks moves his own story backwards and forwards

in time, switching perspectives and retelling events from different angles. For a novel which is

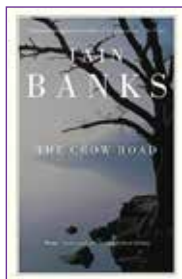
frequently about death, there is an awful lot of humour too – often dark, but equally hilarious.

Banks is also known for his science fiction, written as Iain M Banks, and he wrote a whisky-

logue 'Raw Spirit,' which is both well written, and responsible for introducing me to this

spirit. It was certainly a summer of firsts for me! *The Crow Road* will always have a special

place in my heart though, because it was the novel that first introduced me to Banks.



The Enchanted Wood

by Enid Blyton

For those of us of a certain

age Enid Blyton was a

childhood favourite. Through

the eyes of an adult there

is no doubt that she was

a deeply flawed human

being, though arguably she

was simply a product of her

upbringing. Her books drifted

out of favour for many years,

but many have recently been modernised

for today's children...after all, a good story

is still a good story several decades on.

The Enchanted Wood is the first in the Faraway

Tree series, in which three children find

themselves living close to the most amazing

tree you have ever seen. It grows different

fruits at different points, depending on how

it is feeling. It is inhabited by all manner of

strange folk – Silky the fairy, the old Saucepan

Man, Dame Washalot, and the Angry Pixie. At

the top lives Moonface, in a perfectly round

little house with a slide that runs right to the

bottom of the tree. And best of all, there is a

small ladder through the clouds which leads

to a different magical land every time...

Joe, Beth, and Frannie (the names have

been updated from Blyton's originals) have

all manner of adventures there. Sometimes

the lands are full of fun – *The Land of*

Birthdays, for example – while others are

slightly more threatening – *Dame Snap* may

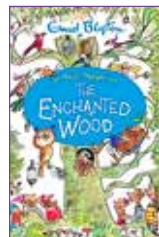
no longer be *Dame Slap*, but her school is

still somewhere no-one would like to visit!

The Enchanted Wood was a favourite of mine

as a child and this slightly tweaked version is a

perfect chapter book for independent reading.



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local police contact for Shirley

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

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

Sudoku Solution
from page 17

F	S	P		D	E							
M	I	N	I	B	U	S	P	I	A	N	O	
N	C	M	S	S	V							
L	A	R	K	P	A	N	I	C	K	E	D	
L	N			E		L						
	S	E	E	T	H	E		C	O	O	L	
R	S		O	Z		O	P					
P	E	G	S		P	R	Y	I	N	G		
V		D			C	R						
D	I	V	E	B	O	M	B		R	O	A	D
V	A	G	O		E	L						
B	E	L	C	H		H	O	S	T	I	L	E
D	H			K	E							Y

Crossword Solution
from page 17



Solution to Mind benders

1. Up against the clock
2. Double Dutch
3. Fair play

mindbenders
from page 18

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