

Kempsey Times



A free monthly newspaper for Kempsey, Norton, Severn Stoke and surrounding villages

Issue 19

October 2025

FREE



England is victorious at the Women's Rugby World Cup!

England Ladies win the Rugby World Cup, watched by millions of spectators. This follows the English Ladies winning the European Football Championship a few weeks earlier. Ladies sport is taking the world by storm! These brilliant achievements have made a dramatic impact on sport in general all over the world.

Who would have thought only a year ago that so many people would be following these events and that they would be so enjoyable? I certainly had my doubts about ladies playing such a physical game as Rugby but I

have been converted. We have more Ladies sport this month with the Cricket World Cup. Will we manage to do the treble? All this excitement was followed by an incredible Ryder Cup golf match between Europe and the

United States. It was golf of the highest standard and, after a nail-biting finish, we retained the trophy. Another brilliant achievement.

The Autumn seemed to suddenly arrive and the weather has been lovely. The leaves are slow to change and we wait for that special time when a lot of nature goes to sleep.

We have gone against economic predictions and launched a new newspaper, Broadway Times. The format will be similar to our other titles and will cover

Broadway and surrounding villages. We have been planning this for some time and believe it will be a successful venture. We are very excited about this project and the idea has already been enthusiastically received. No doubt we will have to work hard but that doesn't bother us. What a privilege it is to publish a newspaper in such a lovely part of England.

Clocks go back one hour on 26th October.

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County and District Report

Councillor Martin Allen



Halloween is upon us, bonfires are being built, and the heat of a long dry summer is now just a memory.

This is an important time for both County and District Councils: they will soon each be voting for the options of the enforced Government Unitary Authority reorganisation. When both councils are scrapped in 2027/8, what will we be left with?

The irony of the expensive consultations and never-ending hot air does not escape me; it's the Government who will have the final say. There is no legal need for them to abide by any evidence councils provide. Democracy seems a little weaker for it.

Kempsey Eco Park moves forward



Exciting times are coming to Kempsey, with a new Eco Park surging ahead: the expectations are that businesses will be moving in before Christmas. As your local County Councillor, I wanted to call round to get an update as the roadworks commenced, just to the south of Kempsey, forming a new, safer HGV and car entrance into the park. I met with Alice Forbes who is the Marketing and Operation Manager for Kempsey Eco Business Park to find out all about it. Alice was delighted to tell me that there had been a lots of enquiries from local businesses and residents who are interested in renting a unit. The Eco Park will be heated using renewable clean biomass energy produced on-site and all the units will have photovoltaic panels producing electricity. There are going to be vehicle charging points, and high-performance insulation materials will be

used to reduce energy consumption and save running costs for the tenants. I know that this is wonderful news for Kempsey: we need more local employment, the site is easily accessible by foot and bike, and, with the fantastic Worcestershire On Demand service plus commercial buses both playing their part, the site will be fully accessible. I understand that there may soon be businesses moving in, such as a dental practice, theatre academy and landscaping company as well as, possibly, something really special – but you will have to wait and see! Local employment for local people is definitely the way forward. The site was previously a commercial small garden nursery with a small shop, and I am delighted to see that it has not been left to go to ruin and waste but has instead been put to good use.

Ripple Memorial



I was very honoured to be asked to take part in the unveiling of a new memorial honouring seven WWII airmen who tragically died in a crash when their aircraft came down just 200 yards from Ripple's Village Hall on 24th August 1944. The Halifax bomber, LW325, ran into trouble during a training flight due to ice, and lost a propeller. Most of the crew were just 19 or 20 – so sad.

I would like to personally thank all those that worked so hard to get the memorial installed. It's worth making a special visit to Ripple: the new memorial is adjacent to the village hall, which has plenty of parking. Then, why not stroll down School Lane and visit Ripple's lovely local church, St Mary's, before popping into the Railway Inn for a bite.



New Boards Please!

I just wanted to let you know about the fantastic work that Mark Mynard and other locals, together with Malvern Hills District Council, have produced with the help of a Heritage Funding Grant. Five new/replacement information boards have been installed in Upton. Victoria Carman

(MHDC) and Mark were kind enough to let me capture the moment. These look absolutely amazing and are well worth a gander. With sterling work from Upton Together, and never forgetting the dedicated people of Upton in Bloom, we can feel blessed to live in and around Upton.

And finally ...

You're be pleased to hear my veg plot no longer looks like a cross between the desert and the Somme. It's mostly now covered up, put to bed, resting until Spring, with only the leeks and sprouts still on show. Nighttime planning has

commenced and operation "Cabbage2026" is down on paper. Many of you will be glad to hear this. I am often asked how my allotment is going; hopefully I will have better news for you next year. As ever, I'm here if you need me.

Martin Allen

A few words from... Dame Harriett Baldwin MP

MP Celebrates Malvern Charity Walkers

Dame Harriett Baldwin MP has praised the efforts of local people who marched across the Malvern Hills to raise money for a veterans' charity.

Organisers of the popular annual Malvern Hills Challenge this week confirmed that walkers had raised nearly £17,000 for the Help for Heroes charity.

Dame Harriett joined local civic dignitaries awarding medals to people who completed the trek along the Malvern Hills.

Hundreds of local people take part in the annual fundraiser and walkers were again treated to a fly past of a Spitfire plane in celebration of their efforts.

The Royal Air Force is this year marking the 85th anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the fly-past was also a fitting tribute to those who gave their lives fighting to defend our way of life in the Second World War. "Each year, I am honoured to be asked to participate in this event and hand out medals to



people who have walked over our wonderful Malvern Hills," said Dame Harriet. "We all know of the important work carried out by those who serve in the armed forces and we acknowledge the great work the Help for Heroes charity does helping veterans who need extra support. Once again, local people have dug deep in their pockets to sponsor local walkers and it's tribute to the enthusiasm and fitness of local people that so many people take part. I want to thank all the volunteers who make this event possible each year and mean that such a large amount of money is donated to a great cause."

Hold the Moment!

Supporting families through life's biggest moments

In September, Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Charity launched its Hold the Moment Maternity Appeal, with a goal of raising £223,000 to enhance maternity services for families across our county. At its heart, this appeal is about people – ensuring every family feels supported through life's most precious moments.

Each year, more than 4,500 babies are born at Worcestershire Royal Hospital. From the first scan to those first days at home, and even in times of loss, our maternity teams stand alongside families every step of the way.

With your help, the appeal will support:

- Buddy beds, so partners can stay close during those first precious nights.
- Specialist jaundice meters in the community, giving newborns quicker, gentler testing.
- Welcoming maternity spaces that bring calm and comfort at life-changing times.

- An expanded Maternity Bereavement Suite, including a new memory-making room for grieving families.

"These enhancements will transform how local families experience maternity care," says Trudy Berlet, Maternity Matron. "We can't remove the challenges, but we can ensure dignity, compassion, and comfort."

This is a cause that touches us all, and by joining together as a community, we can give every family in Worcestershire the support they need during life's most meaningful moments.

Can you help make a difference? Visit:

www.wahcharity.org/moments



Bake Off! at The Lawns

We held a big bake sale for Breast Cancer Awareness at our Residents and Relatives Meeting. A tremendous success, thanks to our residents' and team's hard work. All the money raised went to Breast Cancer Awareness.

Residents love to bake each week; the quality control tasting and the immense pleasure in making so many delicious bakes to share together. They have recently made cherry trifle, lemon meringue pie, cupcakes and apple turnovers, to name a few! They are making savoury treats this Autumn, and also our Christmas cakes (so there's plenty of time for them to be fed with brandy!)

Happy birthday to Graham, who was 83 years young, and celebrated with residents and the team, enjoying a lovely cold pint, after a spot of baking, in his new chef's hat and superman apron!

We had a wonderful afternoon with Dale from Critterish Allsorts. He brought a skunk, a bearded dragon, a tortoise and a chinchilla and was so

informative, answering all of our residents' questions. You are never too old to learn something new!

And we are looking forward to meeting the new cohort of students from Kempsey Primary School and King's College Sixth Form in their Autumn terms.

We have entertainment from guitarist and singer Clive on 19th September and Terry King, a country and western singer on 24th October.

We are marking International Coffee Day – do you know your macchiato from your cappuccino? And having a quiz on World Smile Day. And of course, there will be pumpkin carving for Halloween and poppy making in preparation for Remembrance.

You can keep in touch with all of our news, photos, events and activities on Facebook or via the Heritage Manor website. www.heritagemanor.co.uk/our-homes/the-lawns

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From the Parish Council

The Volunteering Continues

As we continue to celebrate the quiet heroes who make Kempsey such a special place, we turn our attention to Jon, whose simple yet vital act of locking the gates at Plovers Rise each evening ensures the safety and security of our community. It's a task that might go unnoticed, but its impact is felt daily. Jon's reliability and care reflect the very spirit of volunteering: doing what needs to be done, without fuss, for the good of others.

Introducing Heartstart Kempsey

We're launching Heartstart Kempsey, a community resuscitation scheme that will serve Kempsey, Severn Stoke, and Croome D'Abitot. The goal? To dramatically improve survival rates from cardiac arrest by offering free CPR training and increasing the number of public access defibrillators across our parishes. In a cardiac emergency, every second counts. Immediate CPR and defibrillation can mean the

difference between life and death. That's why we need you. To make Heartstart Kempsey a reality, we're looking for at least six volunteers to become trainers. No medical or teaching experience is required, just a willingness to learn and help. All volunteers will complete a short 'train the trainer' course, equipping them to pass on life-saving skills to others.

If you're interested in volunteering for Heartstart Kempsey, please get in touch with the Parish Council. Let's keep the heart of our village beating strong.

Keeping Kempsey Safe: Crime Prevention Event

This October, as part of our ongoing commitment to community wellbeing, Kempsey is proud to host a Crime Prevention Event this autumn.

When?

Wednesday 22nd October 2025, 12:00–14:00

Where?

Kempsey Youth Centre, Plovers Rise, Kempsey



With?

Kempsey & Alfrick Safer Neighbourhood Team and the Rural & Business Officer

This free event offers property marking for items such as bicycles, garden equipment, and tools, making them easier to trace if lost or stolen. You'll also receive expert crime prevention advice tailored to rural and residential needs. Whether you're a homeowner, gardener, cyclist, or local business owner, this is a great opportunity to learn practical steps to keep your property secure.

If you're unsure whether your items can be marked, feel free to contact the team at

ka.snt@westmercia.police.uk

Date for the Diary

Daffodil Planting Weekend – 21st & 22nd March 2026

If you're organised and already have your 2026 diary, then pop

this date in. We'll be planting bulbs in key spots around the village to ensure a cheerful display next spring - adding colour, joy, and a sense of pride to our spaces. Tools and bulbs will be provided, and there'll be tea and biscuits to keep spirits high. It's a great opportunity to meet neighbours, enjoy the fresh air, and contribute to the beauty of our village.

Let's make Kempsey bloom, one bulb at a time!

For more information regarding the activities of the Parish Council, please refer to our website:

www.kempseyhub.co.uk

For all enquiries, please contact Sharon Dunn, Parish Council Clerk and Financial Officer on

01905 828183

or by email at

kempseyparishcouncil@gmail.com

Waggy tails and lots of smiles!



Kempsey said a fitting farewell to Trim-Pets Fun Dog Shows on Sunday 21st September at Plovers Rise Playing Fields. This event had been postponed from the Summer Fete due to hot weather in June (remember that?) Many thanks to Edwards Garages for sponsoring the fourteen classes' Rosettes, kind permission granted by Kempsey Parish Council. Refreshments were

provided by The Lovely Jubbly Tea Stop, while Doggy Treats were on offer from Kempsey's Women's Institute. Proceeds are benefitting the whole community of Kempsey through St. Mary's Church, Kempsey CIC and the Women's Institute. What a brave job done by the event's Judge, Sam - it can only be second to judging a Baby Contest for life threatening decisions!

Music Society

The Music Society meets fortnightly on Thursday afternoons in a comfortable lounge at The Firs on Old Road North from 2:00pm – 4:00pm. We listen to a variety of music, presented by members, or the occasional visiting presenter. We would welcome anyone new who would like to come and join us.

Do come and give us a try. We would like to increase our numbers, so new faces are very welcome.

We have a social break in the middle of the afternoon, for tea or coffee and biscuits.

We are a friendly group and mostly very local to Kempsey.



Our meetings will take place at The Firs on Old Road North from 2:00pm – 4:00pm on:

Thursday 9th & 23rd October and 6th November

For further details please contact: Anne on 07931 636309

Broadway Times

We are pleased to announce that we have launched a monthly newspaper for Broadway and surrounding villages. This will join the Pershore, Upton, Kempsey, Powick and Whittington Times group. The total postal area population covered by the newspapers is in excess of 100,000 inhabitants. We are very excited about this project and believe it will benefit the village and strengthen our existing group of local newspapers.

Editor/Proprietor

Worcester Theatres' most magical panto yet: Sleeping Beauty!

Worcester Theatres is proud to announce that this year's pantomime, 'Sleeping Beauty', will be sponsored by two local Worcestershire destinations: St Peters Garden Centre and Chapel & Friary Walk. With the support of the sponsorships, Worcester Theatres will be able to create the pantomime of the year for the families of Worcester. Following the announcement of the dazzling Sleeping Beauty cast, now is the perfect time to book your tickets! Chapel Walk is located in the heart of Worcester, offering a delightful mix of premium high-street retailers, unique independent shops, charming eateries, and vibrant cultural experiences. Friary Walk Shopping Centre is just a short walk from Worcester Cathedral and the scenic River Severn. St Peters Garden Centre is a family-run garden centre offering quality plants, indoor and outdoor goods, gardening equipment and a very high-quality range of garden furniture and BBQs. They also have an

onsite butcher, farm shop and an award-winning restaurant. St Peters Garden Centre is in the heart of Worcester and only a ten-minute drive from the idyllic Malvern Hills. Sleeping Beauty will take to the Swan Theatre stage from Friday 28th November 2025 to Sunday 4th January 2026. The dazzling five-week production will be full of spellbinding adventure, and follows the magical tale of the beautiful Princess Beauty, who has been cursed by the villainous wicked fairy Carabosse. Will a brave prince arrive in time to wake her from her enchanted slumber? Full of magic, fairies, and traditional panto fun, Sleeping Beauty is a pantomime you could only dream of attending! Worcester Theatres has introduced a new affordable ticket price of just £16.00 this year, with prices ranging up to £28.00. With over 19,000 theatre enthusiasts experiencing the Swan Theatre's panto every year, tickets are sure to sell quickly. We will also be raising



funds for the Swan Theatre's 60th Anniversary Fundraiser, which has a target of £60,000. All donations will support a celebration of the theatre's six decades of commitment to nurturing and showcasing talent in drama, music, dance, comedy and spoken word in Worcester.

Book your tickets now at: www.worcestertheatres.co.uk/whats-on/sleeping-beauty/about-the-show

For further information, please contact Sarah Abbott (Press and Communications Officer) at sarah.abbott@worcestertheatre.co.uk or Tel: 01905 611427

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Fireworks return this November!

One of Kempsey's most anticipated community events is back this November, as the Friends of Kempsey Primary School PTFA prepare to light up the sky with their annual Village Fireworks Night.

Taking place on Saturday 8th November 2025 at Plovers Rise Playing Fields, the event promises an evening full of entertainment, delicious refreshments, and, of course, a spectacular fireworks display. Gates open at 4:00 pm, with the main display set to begin at 6:00 pm.

The Kempsey Village Fireworks has become a highlight of the local calendar, attracting families and visitors from across the area. With food and drink stalls, a warm community atmosphere, and an unforgettable firework

show, it's an evening that truly brings people together. Tracey Were, Chair of the Friends of Kempsey Primary School PTFA said: "Each year, this event gets bigger and better, and we're so proud of how it brings our village together. By purchasing tickets, you're not only securing a fantastic night out but also supporting Kempsey Primary School, as all funds raised go directly towards enhancing opportunities and experiences for pupils."

So, mark your calendars, gather your friends and family, and get ready for an evening of fun, food, and fireworks at Kempsey Village Fireworks 2025! Tickets can be purchased online at: www.pta-events.co.uk/kempseyprimaryschoolptfa



Friends of Kempsey Primary School PTFA presents

**KEMPSEY VILLAGE
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Saturday 8th November

DOORS OPENS AT 4PM FIREWORKS AT 6PM

Cornflower Club

Our next meetings will be 8th and 22nd October, 5th and 19th November. We meet every other Wednesday at 2:30 to 4:30 in the Parish hall, Kempsey. There is a varied programme and we would love to welcome new people to the club. If you

are a lady or gentleman over 60 years of age, please come and join us for a cup of tea and biscuits. We would love to see you.

Contact:

Sally Linsey 01905 820476
Julia Grant 01905 820138

Teddies for Tragedies

With nights drawing in, I'm hoping my knitters are busy making teddies, hats, scarves and mittens, jumpers, and small blankets. I also get a lot of crocheted blankets, large and small, which are most welcome. There is a great need for these

items among those who haven't warm clothes. Christine, who collects all our items, is very busy distributing them in our country and abroad.

For more information, please ring Julia on: 01905 820138

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Broadway Tower

Tim Hickson



Broadway Tower. It is 65 feet tall and stands on the second highest point of the Cotswolds, 1,024 feet above sea level.

In 1750, George William Coventry stood above Broadway near the place where, many years later, the Broadway Tower would be built. He was with his friend, Sanderson Miller, and was looking north-west towards Croome Court, his family home. They would have been discussing the changes George would experience when his father died and he became the Earl. One topic we know they were discussing were the alterations he wanted to make

in order to 'modernise' the house. Sanderson Miller was someone he had come across at Oxford University, who had known George's elder brother, Thomas Henry, and therefore what was being planned for Croome. Thomas Henry had died in 1744, shortly after these young men had left Oxford. That was why, when in 1751, George William became the 6th Earl, he was determined to do the things his brother had planned. Their ancestors had been lawyers and

had acquired vast amounts of land. Not only did the new, young Earl own much of Worcestershire, he also owned parts of Gloucestershire and Warwickshire, as well as land in Somerset, Kent and Northumberland. All of this brought in rents, so he had plenty of money and used it to extend the Court with the help of Lancelot (later 'Capability') Brown and Robert Adam. Out of marshy land, a park was made and buildings added as 'eye-catchers'. These included the Rotunda, the Panorama tower, an Orangery (the Temple Greenhouse), Pirton Castle, Dunstall Castle and even the new Church. The final building, in the 1790s, was Broadway Tower. Fifty years after he had stood there looking out over the valley below, Brown and Adam having both died, he arranged for James Wyatt to design and build the tall tower we see today.

This 'prospect tower', on the scarp of the Cotswolds commanded views of the 6th Earl's estate and the countryside he loved. It is said that the sharp-eyed can even see the Court. It is also said that when the Earl reached that point on his return from London, a beacon was lit on the top of the tower to warn those in the Court that he was on his way. However, since he died before the building was finished, that seems to me to be unlikely!



George William Coventry, 6th Earl of Coventry (1722 - 1809)

Sometime later, in 1873, William Morris and some of his Pre-Raphaelite friends were staying, on holiday, in the tower. It was there that Morris drafted the letter that led to the founding of The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings.

For more information about the iconic tower's history or to book your visit, go to www.broadwaytower.co.uk



The view from Broadway Tower, 275 years after Geogre William Coventry and Sanderson Miller first conceived of ways to modernise his estate.



The interior of Broadway Tower, first opened to visitors by Lord Dulverton of Batsford Estate in 1976.

Farming

Mike Page

I have spoken before about being either an optimist or a pessimist and since the availability and control of many of farming's main inputs lie outside our control the need is always to try and take the optimistic view. We have had two exceptional (in the negative sense) growing seasons in succession: 23-24 was notable for being extraordinarily wet, resulting in crops being grown in such conditions that yields were poor with many fields a quagmire or completely flooded and not being planted at all; season 24-25 has been exceptionally dry resulting in poor crops for entirely different reasons. I know of one farmer who was out on June 30th harvesting fully ripe Barley: the first time in his farming life he has ever had the combine in the field in June; harvest of Barley would not commence normally before well into July; having had its full grain filling and ripening season lopped that much shorter than usual, yield is obviously down. Likewise, much of the Wheat crop became fully ripe and ready for harvest by mid/late-July rather than the more usual time of mid-August, and yields are likewise down. To make matters even worse, UK ex-farm grain prices – set very much by international trading levels, are on the low side. In an effort to try and find some good news somewhere, I can report that some crop yields are not quite as low as some were predicting. But to look ahead and try remaining on the bright side, preparations for season 25-26 are already well under way; and I know of a few fields with crop seeds (Oil Seed Rape) already planted and with such rain as we

have had in more recent weeks, near surface moisture levels have been high enough for those crops to be already germinated and showing above ground level. Today as I write this (14th September) it is bucketing down, and has been for several hours: more rain in the last 3 to 4 hours than in the previous 4 months? Next week (as I am writing this) on 21st September many of us locals involved in farming will be enjoying a day at the annual Crowle Ploughing Match – a day to be enjoyed going right back for me to my Young Farmer's Club days in the 1960s/70s – watching old and young test their ploughing skills against one another. Traditional furrow ploughing was the means by which just about all arable farming started out on its annual cycle when I came into farming life in the mid-1960s; nowadays a wide range of cultivation techniques are used, including 'direct drilling', where with the correct equipment to do the job, the next crop is planted directly into the otherwise undisturbed (or minimally disturbed) stubble of the last crop grown. Or if another crop is not to be established until much later (probably in the following spring) a 'catch' or 'cover' crop can be grown. It is planted to maintain soil cover above, and throw down roots below, during the time the soil might otherwise be more or less idle and does a lot to help maintain natural soil structure, and its capacity to be the best growing medium it can be, as well as taking in moisture and acting as a control to rainwater run-off causing potential problems elsewhere. In a natural ('wild') environment soil is rarely left bare as when one plant dies off,



Three weeks ago, this field looked bleached and dead. Grass, when under drought stress can go into a seemingly 'dormant' phase where much of the individual leaf area dies off, but the core of the plant remains alive, ready to erupt into new growth when conditions allow. The new greenery will provide grazing for livestock well into the later autumn and early winter.

for whatever reason, there will almost always be something taking the opportunity to commence growth in its place. It is simply a case of us trying to manage land in the way nature would do it if left to its own devices. Present drought conditions have not only affected arable crops but have seriously reduced grassland growth leaving grazing livestock potentially short of food. Reserves of fodder gathered only weeks ago to provide food for livestock over the coming winter are being used already on some farms to supplement the shortage of grazing now. Yet another problem to have to deal with, but recent rains have brought back some green growth to seemingly dormant pastures, which gives hope that one way and another, we will cope. It may not be their first choice of food to eat, but most livestock will take to straw (preferably Barley straw) as a food quite readily if the alternative is going hungry. As a background to all this it is worth saying that agricultural land values and land rents are

mostly at a level where the only way of making a profit from farming it, with the current changes in Government financial support, is to aim for maximum production. One major problem there is that Government support is now increasingly changing to being directed toward environmental schemes, and the two objectives are, to farmers with experience like mine, mutually incompatible. We (and the Government!) are on a steep learning curve and it must be the case that eventually a position will be found that keeps both sides happy and at the same time, the Country reasonably well supplied with home-grown basic foodstuffs. A bit like adding 2 + 2 and hoping you can come up with the answer 5. As I have said before, with one of the biggest factors in farming being the weather, over which we have no control whatsoever, I remain an optimist and hope that my Mathematics teacher back in school days, who assured me time and time again that $2 + 2 = 4$, got it wrong.

Sunday Roasts are Back!

or join us Thursday to Saturday for our new menu

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Why Do I Keep Bees ?

Martyn Cracknell



A French bee hotel which would grace any English garden

At last, we've made it through August. For me, this is a time to sit back and take stock of the year so far. Spring and Summer are always frenetic with preparing colonies for the upcoming season, teaching beginners, assembling displays for various shows, attending conferences and trade shows, taking swarm control

measures, collecting swarms that are notified to us, raising new queens, dealing with the honey crop and fending off wasp attacks, and so on. Now, for a few weeks, I put the bees on the back burner. I may have a little more honey to extract by the end of the month, and, if necessary, supplementary

winter feeding and checks for pests and diseases but generally, for me, it is a quieter time and I often ponder what on earth makes me do it! Even the two words, 'harvesting honey', conceal a huge amount of effort and organisation and potential conflict in the kitchen. The preparation area has to be 'food hygiene clean'. The cat has to be banished, all doors and windows closed to keep wasps and bees out... and, in the recent heat, that is unbearable. Jars and storage containers must be cleaned, labels conforming to labelling standards are required, and the list goes on... and when you think you've finished for another year, there's a lingering stickiness on door handles, light switches and even the steering wheel... How did that get there?

People keep bees for all manner of reasons. Some feel that it is a badge of their environmental credentials, and whilst having a hive won't 'Save the bees', it does encourage an appreciation of plant diversity, and land management and a greater awareness of all insects, not just honeybees.

So, couldn't I just have some bees in a box at the end of the garden and leave them to their own devices without any intervention?

Unfortunately, honey bees in Britain are close to the limit of their natural distribution and truly wild colonies are few and far between. The combination of uncertain weather conditions, introduced pests, and natural predators means that they tend to die out. With more warm seasons, their chances of survival may be much higher, but then their hives may become congested with surplus honey, encouraging the release of multiple swarms... and that can be a public nuisance. Responsible beekeeping requires gentle hands-on management without unnecessary intervention, helping to steer a path from one season to another. For a box of pollinators that does not require management, why not build a big solitary bee hotel? Of course they don't provide any honey, but as I have found throughout my life, 'You don't get something for nothing'.

Village Life

John Driscoll

I'm writing this as September unfolds and we're facing the inevitable break in the weather after a summer of record high temperatures and long, dry months. It obviously couldn't last, and it hasn't! Torrential rains have passed through and are starting to penetrate the ground. It's incredible how quickly the grass that was yellow a few weeks ago is fast returning to green. The summer break from regular mowing is surely over. One very confusing result of the extreme summer has been the trauma caused to our trees and plants, many of which have gone into survival mode. Autumn colours were evident from mid-August, with leaf drop, die-back and an abundance of acorns as oaks attempt to spread as much potential for new life as possible. Many other varieties must be doing the same. Very unsettling for all of us. Village life enjoyed a magnificent boost with a party to celebrate four years with our pub landlady and landlord, during which they and their team have built a brilliant hub for all of us. Hub/pub seem to

be interchangeable in this case! This truly is the embodiment of community spirit and provides us with a great focal point. The anniversary festivities included delicious food from an enormous trailer, plus a magician who roamed the crowd performing mind-bending tricks, a live band and a simply amazing fire eater, who also juggled (with and without fire) and blew giant bubbles, time-honoured tombola, wine bottle hunt and a higher/lower game, plus a little den for 'put in/take out' in the snug. Fun for all and a great way to meet up with neighbours, rounding off with a donation to the Alzheimer's Society from these various fundraising activities. A further fantastic fundraising effort for the same very worthwhile charity followed a few weeks later. About a dozen ladies from the village set out to walk a section of the Malvern Hills, bedecked in bright blue Alzheimer's Society t-shirts. They raised an amazing sum of £2,500 through various forms of sponsorship. So many of us are touched by this cruel disease through family members and



friends who live with the condition, so it is maybe not surprising that so many people sponsored so generously. An amazing effort and a great achievement – some of the walkers may have been a little hesitant but were rewarded by sharing a great sense of achievement – not to mention a picnic and a swift drink on the way home (for the non-drivers)! Local fundraising will continue in September with an event emulating a Macmillan coffee morning (it's in the afternoon), which will no doubt once again result in a donation to this similarly vital charity that also touches so many of our lives. Where is this being held? At the hub, of course! An event raising funds for one of our local churches is also being held during the

month, with an array of refreshments and activities – not at the pub this time, but at the church. So, what's next for our village? Here's hoping the autumn doesn't bring too many extremes of weather, and especially that the inevitable rain doesn't come 'too much too soon' with unwelcome consequences. Of course, there are plenty of good things to savour at this time of year, from long walks through swishing leaves to log fires and cosy evenings. And what better way to save on home heating than to visit your local pub to share their log fire alongside friends and neighbours – helping community spirit in the process and maybe adding a few pennies to the charity pot on the bar for good measure. Cheers!

Escape from Mariupol, Ukraine: Part Two

Denys Bielov



*The Mariupol Drama Theatre, bombed on 16th March 2022.
'CHILDREN' is written on the ground outside.*

Last month, I began to tell the story of the invasion of Ukraine from the east by the Russians in February 2022, how it affected our homes in the city of Mariupol and later my escape.

March and April 2022 were the most hungry months. Those who stayed in Mariupol had run out of food by March. People got water in different ways. Mostly, they melted snow and collected rainwater. Even though it was poisoned by burning and explosives, they tried to filter it using whatever they had available. In the apartments of the surviving buildings, people drained the water from the heating systems for drinking.

In some areas, that were more fortunate, there were natural groundwater streams where people queued in long lines to get to them. They waited for many hours in the cold, risking being killed by shrapnel from exploding shells while waiting and when walking home. There was no other choice. We had to take risks. Otherwise, you could die of thirst and hunger. Cooking was impossible without water.

The men from the Ukrainian Azov regiment, in short breaks between battles, organised food distribution several times a week from the surviving shops and supermarkets. This was very risky because the occupiers, seeing people in military uniforms, would start firing artillery, despite the fact that there were civilians nearby. We had to run away and hide. Even when Azov brought a tanker truck with drinking water to distribute to the people, the occupiers bombed it. I don't know what happened to the people who were there. I hope they managed to take cover. Our soldiers became fewer and fewer and were no longer able to bring food. Mad with hunger, people themselves

began to open the food warehouses and shops. They took out everything that was edible, even that which was beginning to spoil, boiled it on a fire and ate it. Salads were made from spring grass, nettles, dandelions, and stocks of wheat groats that could still be obtained in some warehouses.

It was hard for many people not to go insane when they realised that today, ten to fifteen houses in your neighbourhood would be destroyed by direct or close hits. You can only pray that your house will not be among them. Hundreds of houses will be damaged, and fires will burn again. This is hellish 'Russian roulette'. Every morning, you wake up to another bombing, when the house shakes from hits within a half-kilometre radius. These Russians did not even look where they were shooting. The bombs and missiles would come from anywhere. Once, a shell landed in my yard (my house was barely standing) and about seven or eight more shells fell nearby, within a radius of 80 metres. Some hit houses, some hit gardens, some hit a playground, a shop ... there were

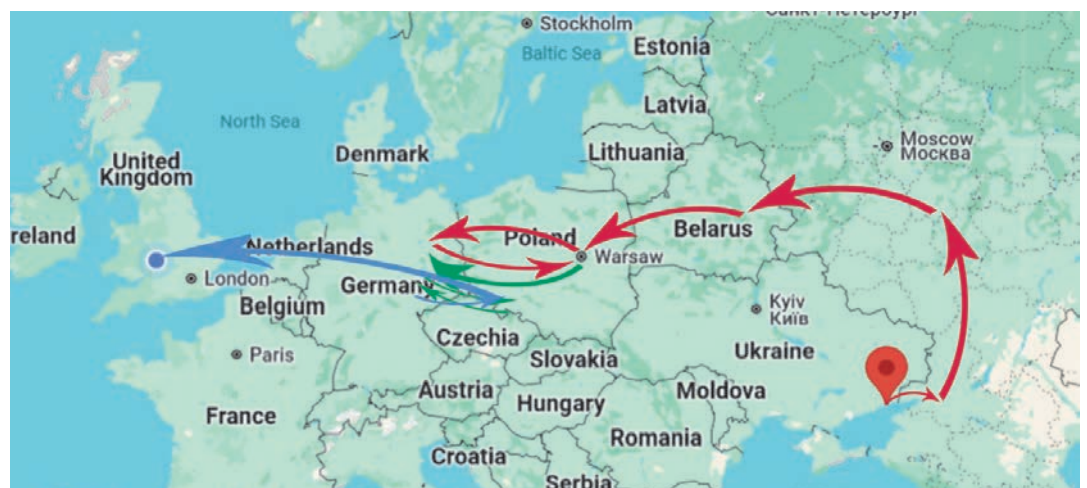


*'Hundreds of houses will be damaged,
and fires will burn again.'*

no military targets here. The only people in the shop were the shop staff and the director. A minute later, the employees dragged the bloody body of the director outside. It was extremely dangerous to go outside, because shrapnel from high-explosive shells scatter hundreds of metres, and the walls of houses and fences of the plots can at least somehow protect you.

There were many hungry, angry and frightened dogs running around the streets. People, who had left could not take their pets with them and simply let them run free. Many died of starvation and cold right on the street, or were mauled by stronger animals, or killed by shrapnel. Often, you could see a crater somewhere on the road, and next to it, in a pile of earth and shrapnel, several torn corpses of dogs and cats. The Russians were shooting at everything: infrastructure, buildings, hospitals, shops, pharmacies. Even maternity hospitals, kindergartens, schools and the drama theatre, the pearl of Mariupol, were not spared. Mariupol residents, who had already lost their homes, hoped

that at least this beautiful, monumental historical building would not be destroyed. They set up a shelter for families with children there. And on the theatre square next to it, they wrote the Russian word 'ДЕТИ' in huge letters, which means 'CHILDREN'. But even this did not save the drama theatre. A bomb was dropped on it. Everyone inside died, about 500 people. On the streets of Mariupol, you often saw a picture on the gates of houses saying 'people and children live here', but behind the gates, there were only burnt walls and rubble. Not a single gram of humanity from the Russians who came to Ukraine, just extreme evil! Their tactic was to paralyse the life of the city, regardless of the number of civilian casualties. The more Ukrainians tried to defend themselves, their homes, their relatives and friends, the more Russians became violent, hateful and eager to kill as many as possible and destroy everything that could somehow remind them of Ukraine. This is a real genocide, violent and brutal.



Mariupol: over two thousand miles away from Worcester, currently under Russian control

Autumnal Planting Ideas for Halloween

Autumn is here with its crisp air and with less daylight hours, the leaves have begun their fiery descent. So, my thoughts have turned to Halloween at the end of the month and how I can decorate the porch for the seasonal change and incorporate spooky season. Arriving home and being greeted by a beautiful display with cosy textures and rich, earthy tones offers instant comfort and softens the chill in the air before coats and boots are even off. If you fancy creating an autumnal display, here's a few ideas to get started. All of these plants are available from the local garden centre, so they're easy to find:

- *Chrysanthemums* (affectionately known as *Mums*): These classic autumn flowers come in autumnal shades of orange, purple, rust, and amber.



Their dense petals and rounded daisy-like shape make them ideal for containers.

- *Heuchera*:

An evergreen perennial with ruffled foliage in glowing copper tones. It adds texture and depth to container displays.

There are so many colours to choose from so you're bound to find one suitable for your colour scheme and can be popped into the border too.

- *Physalis alkekengi* (commonly known as the *Chinese Lantern*):

These are great for drying and adding to door wreaths.

- *Calluna* (*Heather*):

Comes in lots of lovely colours, and the purple shades go really well with pumpkin décor. They flower from late summer to early winter and can be planted in the borders afterwards.



- *Ophiopogon planiscapus 'Nigrescens'*:

Which is a low growing black grass which is very effective and can add some depth to your display and an interesting contrast to all the orange.

Planters:

Terracotta plant pots are ideal with their orangey-warm tones. Most can tolerate the frost, but it's worth checking before purchasing. Get different sizes to add interest – you can always stand the pot on a chunky wooden block to raise the height at the back of the display.

Wooden crates and baskets:

These are perfect for a temporary display, and you can include anything from gourds, fruit and bunches of dried flowers to spooky ornaments. Pumpkins: hollow them out and



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carve them, add some battery-powered fairy lights for dark nights or you could add a vase of fresh flowers. And if you only have a windowsill to decorate, you can still do this with some gourds and tealight holders, add some trailing ivy in-between. Include twigs, berried branches and teasels to provide some height, texture and colour.

Transforming your porch with a seasonal display doesn't require a full overhaul - just a few thoughtful touches and a dash of creativity. Remember to add a cauldron of sweets and get ready for the trick-or-treaters.

October gardening tips

Reg Moule BBC Hereford & Worcester

Early in the Month

New lawns can still be seeded (soon) or turfed this month. This is a good time to plant trees, shrubs, roses, fruit trees and soft fruit plants. Clear summer bedding from tubs and borders and replace it with plants which give colour through to spring. Garden Centres will have an extensive range of suitable species in their planterias including Winter Pansies, Violas, Wallflowers, Ornamental Cabbage etc. Don't forget to add some colourful evergreen plants and spring flowering bulbs to your planting scheme. Osteospermums, Arctotis, Argynthemums and other tender perennials should be lifted from the borders, potted and brought inside for the winter.

Spray peaches and nectarines with Vitax Copper Mixture against peach leaf curl. Spring flowering bulbs of all kinds can be planted outdoors this month.

Middle of the Month.

Rake up fallen leaves both for general hygiene and to use to

make leaf mould – a valuable soil conditioner or a peat substitute in homemade potting compost recipes. Continue planting spring flowering bedding like Wallflowers, Brompton Stocks, Forget-Me-Nots and Sweet Williams.

Allow the first frosts to blacken off Dahlia foliage before lifting and drying the tubers ready for winter storage. Treating the tubers with sulphur dust before storage helps to prevent rotting. If you have light soil consider leaving the tubers in the soil over winter, perhaps with a protective mulch of garden compost or bark over the root area. Gladioli corms should be lifted, dried and stored in a frost-free place until spring.

Clean up dead foliage from the centres of Pampas Grass clumps, but wear strong gloves to avoid being cut by the razor sharp leaves. Lift and divide large clumps of early flowering perennials. Late flowers can be left until spring. Mow lawns less frequently and treat them with an autumn lawn fertiliser. Lawns also benefit from a good

wire raking to clear "thatch" and spiking with a hollow tined aerator. Hardwood cuttings can be taken from now onwards but the sooner the better.

Tidy up pond plants, removing the foliage from water lilies before they decompose in the water. Feed your fish less often as they begin to slow down for the winter. Remember to use a wheatgerm based food as these are much easier for the fish to digest.

Prune blackcurrants, blackberries and hybrid berries, e.g. loganberries, tayberries.

Watering and ventilation need careful attention in greenhouses in order to avoid fungal diseases. Sow winter lettuce under cloches and frames.

Plant lily bulbs in pots in a cold greenhouse to get early flowers.

Sow sweet peas in pots in a cold frame. Protect against damage by mice.

Pick apples and pears.

Remember to remove any mummified fruits as these harbour brown rot disease. As houseplants slow down for



the winter, they will require less watering and feeding.

If you wish to move any deciduous shrubs do the job now. Lift the plants with a good rootball intact and re-plant firmly.

Late in the Month.

Tall deciduous shrubs – e.g. roses, Lavatera and Buddleia can be cut back by one third in order to prevent wind rock.

Dead foliage on any herbaceous plants can be removed between now and next Spring.

Sow broad bean Aquadulce Claudia in mild areas to crop next June.

Plant Paperwhite Narcissi now for flowering in mid-December. Keep the planted containers in a light warm place.

Ailsa's Kitchen

Ailsa Craddock

Apples and Pears - The gluts and harvest continue as fruit trees groan under the weight of ripe apples and pears, the branches bending downwards (always amazes me how much they spring up when you've picked!) What can you NOT do with apples – surely one of the most versatile of foods.? Freeze them, stew them, make puddings, cakes, sauces and put them in savoury dishes.

So many different varieties to choose from – everyone will have their particular favourite. With over 7,000 different cultivars available worldwide, it's no surprise that apples are the most widely consumed fruit globally. A good source of fibre and vitamins C and E. They may help lower high cholesterol and blood pressure levels, can aid digestion and support a healthy immune system. October is the perfect month to make this favourite combination of Pork and Apple.

Pork and Apple Casserole

700g pork cubed
1 tablespoon seasoned flour
2 tablespoon sunflower oil
100g smoked streaky bacon, chopped
large leek, cut into chunks
Garlic clove, crushed
500 ml dry cider
250ml chicken stock
tablespoon soured cream (if you don't have any, add a little lemon juice to plain cream - or even use cream fraiche)
1 tablespoon wholegrain mustard
squeeze of lemon juice (optional)
2 apples, cored
50 g butter
2 tsp. Soft Brown Sugar
1 tablespoon sage, roughly chopped

Heat the oven to 170°C (150°C fan oven) gas mark 3. Toss the pork in the seasoned flour. Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large hob proof casserole dish. Brown the pork in batches over a medium to high heat and set aside. Fry bacon in the casserole to release the fat then turn up the heat and fry until golden. Set aside with the pork. Fry the leek until lightly golden, then add the garlic and cook for 1 minute. Stir in any leftover seasoned flour and cook for 1 minute. Gradually blend in the cider and stock and bring to the boil. Return the pork and bacon to the casserole, cover and cook in the oven for 1-1½ hours until the pork is tender.



Remove meat and leeks with a slotted spoon and keep warm. Put the casserole over a medium heat. If the sauce is thin, reduce a little until syrupy. Add the cream and simmer for 2 minutes until thickened. Stir in the mustard. Check the seasoning and add a squeeze of lemon juice if necessary. Meanwhile, halve the apples, then cut into 1cm thick slices. Melt the butter in a pan with the sugar. When it's stopped foaming, add the apples and fry gently for 3-5 minutes until tender and caramelised. Serve the pork and apple casserole garnished with the apple slices and sage.

Pickled Pears

Pickled pears make the season last until the festive time. They go excellently with Christmas leftovers – Stilton, ham, roast meats and more.

500g sugar
1 litre cider vinegar
1 cinnamon stick

2 – 3 star anise
5 slices of fresh ginger, peeled
½ teaspoon black peppercorns
3 slices of lemon plus a squeeze of juice
6 smallish pears
2 sprigs fresh rosemary
Optional:
A few cloves and/or juniper berries

Simmer and stir sugar, vinegar and spices in a large stainless steel saucepan over a low heat until sugar is dissolved. Add peeled pears to the vinegar mix. Stir and skim off any foam as they cook. Once the pears are tender and opaque (about 15 mins) stir them in to sterilised jars and tuck in the lemon slices and rosemary sprigs. Pop the vinegar syrup back on the hob and boil till reduced a bit (about 5 mins). Pour over the pears up to the top and spoon in the spices. Store in a dark, cool place for up to 6 months (you can eat them sooner if you want!).

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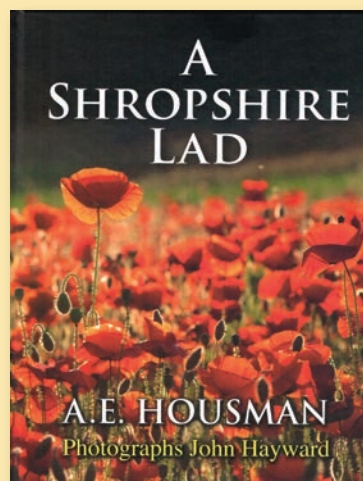


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Who's in charge?

Angela Johns

It is part of the human condition to worry. Used to your advantage, it is a way to problem solve. It also guides us to do a good job, make preparations, treat people with kindness or help to keep them at arm's length. It gives us a motive to do something in the present that will help us in the future. It also shows us how much we care about those we love, including ourselves.

But what happens when worry takes on a life of its own? It is the uninvited whisper in your ear that pretends it is helping you. It's the fiction that keeps on getting more preposterous the more airtime it is given. It comes with a soundtrack that builds to a loud crescendo, making your heart beat faster and your palms go damp. It starts to colour our everyday with grey and becomes a weight that holds us down. Don't put worry in charge – it's out of control! Worry is focussed on a potential future. Will it turn out how we want? Or, in the language of worry, will it not turn out how we want? More importantly, how will we be able to stand it? Worry is trying to hold us back in order to avoid difficult feelings in the future - failure, shame, discomfort, embarrassment, loss. Will we be able to bear it? The irony is that worry brings difficult feelings into the present instead and crowds out the good. It's a challenge to hold these two opposing feelings at once and one of them usually wins out. So, don't put worry in charge – it's out of control! If we carry its weight on our shoulders with its scaly fingers covering our eyes, it will use up our energy resources and blind us from seeing the



solution. Wouldn't it be better to invite it to walk beside us instead? We can then be free to ask its advice, challenge its narrative to discover truth, or ask it to be quiet so that you can think straight. We can give it a name that is not our own and allocate the time we are willing to spend in conversation with it. Creating this distance between it and you means that you get to be in charge. It can come for the ride but it's you in the driving seat. Most of what we worry about doesn't turn out as badly as we imagined it would. It can be difficult to live with the uncertainty of the future. But if life is unpredictable, then that means good things can come along too. If we use up our energy trying to control the future, we have less available to have fun – or, at least, to be comfy with simply being ok. And, for most of us, being ok is just fine. Being ok is peace. *Angela is a qualified Emotional Therapeutic Counsellor registered with the FETC and NCPS.*

Also a Reflexologist and Reiki Practitioner, she is passionate about her therapies and spends quality time with her clients to facilitate their wellbeing. You can find her at www.angelajohns.co.uk

New Beginnings

Emily Papirnik

Sometimes beginnings feel exciting, full of possibility and light. Other times, they can feel daunting, even frightening. Change often carries both hope and uncertainty in equal measure. However, if we hold on to faith - faith in ourselves, in the process, and in the unseen support around us - we can begin to shift that fear into joy, curiosity, and creativity. Manifesting what we truly want happens with much more ease when we let go of resistance, stay present in the moment, and choose to transform the energy of fear into the spark of excitement. Here are three ways to embrace new beginnings with trust and positivity:

1) Reframe Fear as Energy
Fear and excitement are closely linked - they both create physical sensations in the body. When you notice fear rising, pause and ask yourself: What if this isn't fear, but the energy of something new and expansive? By reframing, you open the door to growth instead of retreat.

2) Stay Present, Step by Step
It's easy to become overwhelmed by the big picture of change. Instead, bring yourself back to the present moment. Focus on just the next step, however small. Living moment to moment



allows clarity and ease to guide you forward.

3) Visualise the Outcome You Desire

Take a few minutes each day to imagine your new beginning unfolding in the most beautiful way. See yourself thriving, feel the joy in your body, and allow that vision to become a magnet drawing your dreams closer. New beginnings are not about erasing the past - they are about stepping into alignment with what is calling you now. With trust, presence, and a willingness to shift fear into excitement, you allow life to unfold in ways beyond what you may have imagined.

What new beginning is calling you right now?

If this resonates with you, you might enjoy exploring more reflections and resources on my blog:

www.intentiontherapy.co.uk/blog

'Mighty things from small beginnings grow.'

John Dryden

'Annus Mirabilis' (1667)

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Romy's Uni Life

Romy Kemp *Liverpool University*



Settling into Third Year

I have now been back at university for a couple of weeks and I've had a hard time settling in. There was only me and one of my flatmates in the house for my first week back, which was extremely quiet but definitely gave me time to sort out my room and the kitchen. The majority of my week was filled with cleaning everything and doing a lot of washing, as well as meal prepping. I'm really trying to keep my life and schedule organised so that I can get into a routine for the

entire year of university. I really want to do well in my final year, so I believe that the set schedule will help with this. I've felt quite homesick since coming back to university, which has been hard because the summer break is so long. I left university for home in June, so it's been a long time of being at home and spending time with my family, my pets, and my friends. Living with new people this year at university is difficult after living with the same people for first and second year. I will still meet up with my former

housemates but it's very different living with six other people when you're used to living with the same two friends. It has been nice to bond more with my course mates, who I'm living with, as well as the other friends that I'm living with, but it's important to remember that life isn't always going to be easy rolling. This is very much the case for university because everyone has different priorities (from partying, to studying, to relaxing), and so it's important to be the same and fill life with different events and opportunities. My plan is to gain more work experience this year; however, I do not know where or in what. I'd like to do more work experience in another school, maybe in Liverpool, as well as doing work experience in a different field of work. I would also like to start a new hobby this year, but I don't know if I'd like to do an independent or a social hobby. It would just be nice to learn a new skill that I don't have to pay for. I also plan on connecting with nature again this year, as I was unable to last year due to living in a more built-up area; however, I have



returned to the more scenic part of Liverpool, despite it being further away from university. There is a lake close to where I am living that I loved walking around in first year, so my plan is to do the same again this year. Maybe it'll help me relive the joys and feelings of first year. It was so nice to have a place to familiarise myself with in first year that reminded me a little bit of home, plus I loved spotting different animals. I hope my modules go well this semester and that everything settles into place for me, as I want to have a fabulous last year of university in Liverpool. For all of those who are starting a new year of school, college, university, or work, I wish only the best for you all. Even for those who have settled into something, surprises and fun can arise when you least expect them.



Preventative Health Care



Preventative health care is an important part of veterinary practice. It is a medical approach focused on maintaining good health and stopping diseases before they occur. The main way of doing this is through regular health checks for your pet with vets and nurses and keeping up to date with vaccinations. It can also include regular parasite control for both external parasites (fleas, ticks and mites) and internal parasites (gastrointestinal round- and tapeworms).

What happens at a health check?

At a routine health check the vet will perform a physical exam looking for anything out of the ordinary. Areas that are looked at include:

- Mouth – checking for dental disease or other disorders
- Eyes – looking for signs of aging of the lens and conditions like 'dry eye'
- Ears and skin – checking for signs of irritation or growths that can occur over time
- Chest – listening for indications of heart or lung disease
- Abdomen – feeling for any abnormalities like fluid or growths
- Mobility – are they moving around as freely as they should be

If anything of concern is found, then discussions can be had as to what the next steps could be. This might be further investigations, treatments or just monitoring.

As cats and dogs age much quicker than humans we recommend 6 monthly health checks, often an annual vaccination and health check with the vet and a visit at 6 months with the nurse.

Older animals also benefit from routine blood and urine testing and blood pressure checks. These can often detect conditions much earlier than when looking for clinical changes in your pet's health.

If your pets' vaccination has lapsed this can be quickly got back up to speed with a second 'top up' vaccine to ensure full immunity. We regularly run a Vaccination Amnesty where you can get the vaccination course for the cost of a booster vaccination if your pets' vaccines are overdue.

Best wishes *Eliza*

Gregory's World!

Boston Found

Ever heard of the Pentagon Pizza Index? It's an online tracker of takeout pizza orders within the vicinity of the Pentagon; a surge suggests a major international crisis or event is imminent, because all the office staff are staying behind late and getting margheritas and meat feasts delivered to their desks. On the weekend of 30th-31st August, the Pizza Index spiked. Also on the weekend of 30th-31st August, Natdog and I made the final preparations for our hotly anticipated road trip around America. I am 97.6% sure that these two facts are unrelated. My grin was giving the Cheshire Cat a run for his money. I'd absorbed so much of America through the internet and the TV, that I almost felt as if I'd already been there. But this would be my first time ever setting foot outside Europe; my first time driving on the right side of the road; my first time eating my body weight in blueberry pancakes. Bring it on!

After landing in Boston, we rocked up at the Avis car rental centre and were given the keys to a huge black Mazda. I'd already had a go at driving Grandad's automatic at home, so I was first to take the wheel. We figured out how to start the engine, then deactivate 'Park' mode and the handbrake (not a

satisfying lever, but a tiny switch). I prefer driving without bits and pieces in my pockets, so I put my passport safely beside the cup holder, then psyched myself up for the forty-minute drive to our motel. Gulping, I fired up the engine. A warning flashed on the dashboard: 'Low tire pressure!'. Oh. We explained the situation to a member of staff; he responded by giving us the keys to an even bigger Volkswagen Atlas, a seven-seater behemoth, which we named 'Marylou'. Driving Marylou was like floating on a cloud, high off the road. With Natdog navigating on Google maps, I steered us along the concrete runways of central Boston, down five-lane highways that merged and looped and spun off like spaghetti deep into Massachusetts, to the Bedford Motel. The suburbs were gloomy; cicadas and katydids pulsed in the trees; you got a sense of forested wilderness looming forever on the doorstep. I parked up and checked my pock – Fellow reader, my heart dropped. Passport! I left it in the Mazda!

It had been a twenty-nine-hour day for us. As sleep-muddled delirium spread over me, I sank into bed, knowing we'd have to venture back into the lion's den of central Boston to retrieve my identity, my way home.

The next morning, we bought

supplies from Stop & Shop – deodorant, toothpaste, shower gel, and a hands-free satnav clamp for our phones – only for Natdog to battle through a labyrinth of death-defying junctions en route to Avis. Driving in America felt like moving from primary to secondary school, where everyone's suddenly bigger than you, nudging or knocking you in the corridor, shouting 'Watch out!' or 'Move!' Bulky GMCs and Chevrolets squeezed and honked onto the highways. I couldn't help but breathe in as yellow school buses and semi-trucks, with exhaust pipes like devils' horns, closed in around us. When we finally returned to Avis, the staff told us we couldn't park here or there, and when I asked if I could search for the black Mazda and my passport – "They're gone."

G-gone? I felt queasy and cold all over. Natdog managed to park the car and, at the reception desk, our curly, red-haired hero, Loretta, made a few calls. No luck. All I could do was log a lost item complaint. Her strained expression suggested these rarely came to anything. I must've looked pretty downtrodden, because she rummaged under her desk. "This is a little girly ... but I think you might need it." She passed me a 'lucky little turtle' keyring charm ('Especially for you, to bring good luck the whole day through'). I've never really been

Gregory Sidaway



superstitious, but after the last twenty-four hours, I was clenching that turtle like a lifeline. So much for our hotly anticipated road trip! This never happened to Kerouac when he was 'On the Road'. We'd barely put rubber to tarmac, and I was already thinking about how on Earth I was going to get back home. There was no other choice, I thought as we walked back through the Avis car park. I couldn't wait for the slimmest-of-slim chance that Avis would recover my passport. I'd have to apply online for an emergency one. Okay. That was doable. After all, now I had my lucky turtle. "Um, Natdog ..."

Our parking space was empty. The Avis guys must've assumed we were returning Marylou. What about all our things? Our supplies from Stop & Shop, our rucksacks, our suitcase, Natdog's passport? "Where's the car?"

Evie's Teenage Focus

Coming back to university for my second year feels so surreal. Even after last month, when I was reminiscing about my first year, trying to give any helpful advice to anybody starting their first year, I almost forgot what it's like to actually be here. This time, everything feels more familiar. So much so that moving into my shared house was just as dramatic as last year's move-in. I think it took me about four train trips on my own and then again with my parents, the car boot and back seats packed to the brim, for me to have everything I needed at the house.

I must say, though, it is really lovely to be living with my friends. There is no awkward small talk in the kitchen, no shuffling around each other, and while the water pressure is questionable and we have an old abandoned chair on the roof

of the shed, it's ours. One thing I must admit is that I miss the massive kitchen we had in my first year flat. I do love living with my friends; however, our kitchen this year is, well ... a bit small. And it's ok, it just means I'm having to re-learn how to cook for myself. And I have mostly figured it out now, just like last year, it's both empowering and exhausting; only by now the novelty of it has worn off, but at least I have my tried and tested recipes from last year, which make everything a bit easier. But, moving past the house, it's good to be back in Oxford. Walking through campus is like seeing an old friend again, and being back in the library before lectures was even giving me an odd sense of comfort. With the first day of lectures growing closer, the group chats were alive again. Some friends had

changed courses, and some had dropped out completely. But after a quick catch-up with friends, the lecturers began again, and we were straight into our core material. The lectures hit fast this year. No warm-up week, just straight into deadlines and reminders of a dissertation looming on next year's horizon. But I actually understand more this time around. I am not just simply surviving or getting through university; I can properly and wholeheartedly engage with it. I also managed to get my timetable sorted on the first try, which is more than I can say for last year!

All in all, the start of my second year has been really good. Of course, I still had nerves (my family will testify to that), but I am excited to be here. The first week of the second year didn't come with the buzz



of new beginnings like the first year did. It's more subtle than that. It's a quiet confidence, a deeper understanding of yourself and what it means to be here. Last year was about finding my feet. I failed, I learned, and most importantly, I've grown. This year will be all about using that to take steps forward. I just can't wait to do it! I'll tell you how it goes next month. For now, Toodles!

Evie Aubin Oxford Brookes University

Tom Jones: an historic novel, a local connection



The White Lion at Upton

I have always loved books, and old books are especially intriguing. Many decades ago, my mother picked up a box of ancient books at an auction; when she and my father subsequently moved to a smaller house, she passed some of these on to me. Two books, in particular, looked tatty and unloved; the covers were loose, pages were falling out, and the lettering on the spines had faded completely. It was almost impossible to read the books, but I saw that they were a two-volume set of the novel *Tom Jones* by Henry Fielding. Henry Fielding was

an 18th-century writer, social reformer and magistrate (with his brother John, he established the Bow Street Runners, which, some would say, was London's first police force). Fielding published *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling* in 1749, and he became known as 'the father of the English novel' for the way he developed structure and used realism in his writing. The book – lauded for its humour and satire – tells of the adventures of Tom, an attractive but unfortunate young man. Adopted as an orphan by a wealthy landowner in Somerset,

Tom has numerous (and complex) romantic and dramatic encounters when he becomes a young man, as he is forced to flee his home to seek happiness in London. The book has been described as a 'bawdy – but not smutty – romp.' I was familiar with *Tom Jones*, having seen the 1963 film version of the story. Amongst others, this starred Albert Finney as Tom; Susannah York as Sophia, the girl he truly loves; Joan Greenwood as Lady Bellaston, the older woman who seduces him, and Joyce Redman as Mrs Waters, a fellow traveller on the road to London, with whom he has a bawdy, but not smutty, liaison in a coaching inn. I was delighted to discover a local connection, as Henry Fielding used the White Lion Hotel in Upton-upon-Severn as the setting for this coaching inn. Fielding had himself stayed there and described it as 'a house of exceedingly good repute.' Arguably one of the most memorable scenes in the film was the one between Tom and Mrs Waters at the inn. The character of Mrs Waters was especially interesting to me, as

I had myself played her part as an eighteen-year-old in a school play. I recall our production being a rollicking caper with a sprinkling of swords and swashbuckling, petticoats and periwigs, and the odd chaste embrace – not on a par with the film version!

Having discovered the link with Upton, I felt I should try to save the old books I had been given from deteriorating even further. I took them to Hughes & Co, which, amongst other things, has a book restoration service. I wasn't at all sure what they would be able to achieve. I was delighted with the results and give thanks to them for this. From being torn, worn and unreadable, the books have been carefully rebound and the pages realigned; they now have beautiful hand-made marbled paper and leather covers, artfully set off with gold lettering. As the nights draw in, I am looking forward to reading these wonderful old books for the first time. As I do so, I shall wonder who has read them before me.

Jo Seaman



The Work of the Elgar Sleuth

Edward Elgar grew up in Worcester in modest social circumstances and earned a knighthood, a baronetcy, the Order of Merit and many honorary music degrees. The Elgar Society is one of the largest composer societies, and the West Midlands Branch continues to flourish.

For details of meetings held at Holy Trinity Church Hall, 1 North Malvern Road, Malvern WR14 4LR, see

www.elgarsociety.org/branches/west-midlands

The Elgar Society receives enquiries from the public, usually wanting confirmation of dubious pieces of information, such as 'I believe I am related through a second-cousin to Sir Edward Elgar'.

These enquiries are passed to me to answer, and I find they are often based on family anecdotes that have no hard evidence to back them up, and suffer from embellishment over time. In order to address them, one needs a large collection of books on Elgar, his family tree and an ability to make connections.

The Elgar sleuth's biggest challenge is finding enough original material for a book. Some years ago, a friend asked me to join her in writing a biography of her great-grandmother, Ann Greening, who was Elgar's mother. There have been dozens of books about Elgar, but hardly any investigate the formative influence of his mother. Little seemed to be known about her,

yet she was his earliest and perhaps deepest source of inspiration. She came from a humble background and received the most basic education, and there was little published documentation. Fortunately, Ann left some unpublished letters, poems, scrapbooks and articles in a family journal, and these items allowed us to tell her story. Her biography describes Ann's childhood among poor farming folk in rural Herefordshire, the move with her family to Worcester, meeting and marrying William Elgar, a piano-tuner, and the two setting up home and raising a family above the family music business.

*Michael Trott,
The Elgar Society*



'Ann Greening: Mother of Edward Elgar'
by Hilary Elgar, Brenda Watson
& Michael Trott

*Published by Brewin Books,
Price: £14.95*

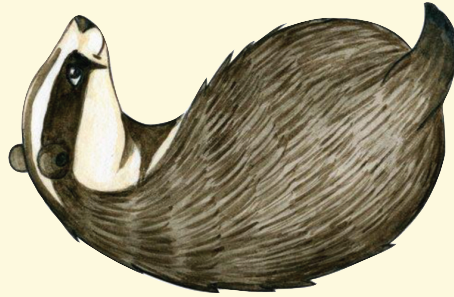
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SUPPLEMENT

Adventures in the Woods

A Children's Story



Badger to the Rescue

by

Peter Moore

(Broadway Author)

Books available soon from Hughes & Company

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It was a very chilly autumn night; the moon was shining brightly in the clear, starry sky. A family of badgers were out for a walk and searching for some food. Mummy Badger let the two kids go and play while she and Daddy Badger looked to see what they could find to eat.

Suddenly, they felt the air above their heads move, even though they couldn't hear anything. It was the old owl who lived up in the oak tree near the pond.

'Hello, Badger,' said Owl. 'How are you doing tonight?'

'Not too bad, thank you, Owl. Just out foraging to get some exercise and find something to eat,' answered Badger. 'Getting hungry now that the weather is changing. It's such a long time underground waiting for the dark to come again.'

'Yes,' Owl agreed, 'the days are long, but winter will soon be here, and the days will be shorter.'

'Have you come across Mrs Fox?' asked Badger. 'Only, I haven't seen her for a few nights.'

'Well,' said Owl, 'I heard that she and Mr Fox were being chased by those big dogs and horses the other day. It's a nasty business being hunted by dogs. Let's just hope they are both safe and well. Perhaps they are hiding somewhere.'

All this time, Trixie and Spike, the two young badgers, were having lots of fun chasing each other and rolling around in the leaves that had fallen to the ground.

Suddenly, they realised that they were now out of sight of their parents. But as they were about to start making their way back, they heard whispering coming from a nearby ditch. They looked at each other nervously, wondering whether they should go and look or just run away.

Trixie bravely crept forward and peered into the ditch. She was very surprised to see two young foxes, who were shivering and looking very scared.

'Hello there,' said Trixie. But the young foxes just sat there trembling.

'We aren't going to hurt you,' said Spike. 'Where are your parents?' he asked.

'We don't know,' said one of the foxes timidly. 'Our parents are missing and we haven't seen them for what seems like days and days. Father went to look for food, and when he didn't come back, Mum put us in here for safety, and then she went to look for him.'

'Well, why don't you come with us?' said Trixie. 'We can ask our parents what to do. We really can't leave you here on your own. It's not safe.'

'When we can find our parents,' muttered Spike.

The two young foxes looked at one another, then agreed to go with the badgers.

Back at the oak tree, Mrs Badger was getting very worried about her children.

'What's the matter, dear?' asked Badger.

'I am just worried as it's been a long time since the children went off to play,' she replied.

'Mm,' agreed Badger, 'it has. I'll go and look for them,' he volunteered.

'No, Badger, you wait here,' said Owl. 'I'll be quicker flying around and my eyesight is much better than yours,' he added.

'Thank you, Owl,' said Mrs Badger gratefully.

While Owl was away, the forest was full of the noises of other nocturnal animals. Down by the water's edge, the small ripples made by the frogs and the water voles glistened in the moonlight. The wind was picking up a little, causing the beautiful red and yellow leaves to fall rustling to the ground.



After a short while, Owl came flying back through the trees and found the badger parents sitting by the pond.

'I have news,' he reported. 'I have found your children, but they are not alone.'

'What do you mean?' asked Badger.

'They have two fox cubs with them,' explained Owl.

'Whatever are they doing with the young foxes?' exclaimed Mrs Badger.

Just as Owl was about to say something, the young badgers and foxes came into view.

'Where did you two get to?' Daddy Badger asked his children.

'Sorry,' said Trixie, 'we went too far and we got a bit lost. Then we found these two young foxes in a cold, wet ditch, and they are scared because they can't find their parents.'

'We know,' said Mummy Badger. 'But hopefully they will be back soon. Until then, the young foxes can stay with us.'

Owl took Badger aside and asked if he could have a word with him.

'Yes, of course,' said Badger. 'What is it?'

'I have just heard from another owl in this area that a fox is badly hurt at the other end of the wood, and that another fox has been caught by the humans who are in charge of the dogs,' explained Owl.

'I think we need to take a look at the injured fox first,' suggested Badger.

Badger drew his wife aside and told her what Owl had reported,

and said that he and Owl would go and see what they could do. 'Be very careful, dear,' said Mrs Badger. 'I will take our little ones back to the sett, and the cubs can come with us.'

'Good idea,' said Badger. 'I will see you all soon.'

As Badger and Owl went off, it was getting colder and windier — not good weather for any animal to be lying injured and alone. When they came to a clearing at the edge of the woods, Badger could hear a faint whimpering above the noise of the wind blowing through the trees.

'Did you hear that, Owl?' asked Badger as Owl was hovering overhead.

'No,' said Owl. 'It's hard to hear much with this wind. We owls rely much more on our eyes than our ears.'

Just then, both of them saw a movement behind a thicket of bushes.

'Look!' said Owl. 'It's Mr Fox and he doesn't look in great shape.'

'Fox,' called out Badger. 'We have been looking for you. How badly are you hurt?'

'Well, Badger,' Fox replied, 'I have felt better.'

'What happened to you?' asked Badger.

'I was out searching for food when I came across the huntsmen and their dogs,' Fox explained. 'I wasn't paying much attention as I had found something tasty to eat, but when I had nearly finished it, the dogs saw me and gave chase. All I heard was them barking and the hunt leader blowing his bugle.'

'How did you get away?' asked Badger.

'I just ran as fast as I could, through the thorn bushes and the open fields, and then across the stream so they would lose the scent. When I could run no more, I stopped here.'

'You seem to have a lot of cuts,' observed Owl.

'I am just so exhausted,' said Fox.

'We have some news for you,' said Badger. 'We found your youngsters hiding in a ditch, but they are safe now with Mrs Badger and our kids. Mrs Fox left them while she went off to look for you, as she was very worried about you, but she hasn't come back.'

'Oh no!' shouted Fox in alarm.

'Don't worry,' said Badger, 'we will go and look for her now, and we won't rest until we find her.'



While Badger and Fox were talking, Owl was flying around, surveying the ground below. Within minutes, he arrived above the hunt compound at the centre of the village and the fields behind it. Near the trees at the edge of the field where the dogs were kept, Owl could see a fenced-off area containing a hut. When he flew down to take a closer look at this area, he could see half a dozen foxes were penned up in there. A vixen crept to the edge of the fence and spoke to him.

'Dear Owl, can you save us?' she begged.

'How did you all come to be here?' he asked.

'I don't know about all the others — they were already here when I was caught,' she replied. 'I was looking for my partner because we hadn't seen him for a long time, but while I was trying to find him, I was trapped by the men and their dogs.'

'Well, we have found your partner,' said Owl, 'and he is safe with Badger now.'

'Is he alright?' asked the vixen anxiously.

'He is a little battered and exhausted, but he will be OK,' said Owl.

'Can you find a way to set us free, Owl?' pleaded the vixen.

'I will see what I can do. I will be back soon,' promised Owl.

As Owl flew off, he could see Badger and Fox at the far end of the woods. He flew down quickly and startled Badger so much that he bumped into a thorn bush and cut his snout.

'Sorry, Badger,' said Owl. 'I have found the vixen and some other foxes locked up in a pen.'

'Why are they locked up?' asked Fox.

'I don't know,' Owl replied. 'But we need to get them out and quick.'

'OK, let's go to the rescue!' said Badger.

It was almost daybreak by the time the three friends had formulated a rescue plan. Owl flew off to a group of trees in the distance. Fox trotted off to his right, keeping to the edge of the tree line, but near enough for Badger to see him. Badger made his way to the pen, keeping as close to the ground as he could. The vixen and the other foxes could see Badger getting closer. Two of them kept a lookout in case the men came out with their dogs.

Badger crept up to the wire and spoke to the vixen. 'Start digging on your side, and I will do the same from this side. Between us, we should be able to make a big enough gap for you all to get out.'

The vixen and the other foxes started digging as well as they were able, given their exhausted state, and the strong and muscular badger rapidly shifted the earth on his side of the fence. Just as they were making progress, one of the look-out foxes shouted an alert. 'The dogs are coming!'

The dogs, who were all barking and snarling, were being held back by the men on horseback. Fox, seeing what was happening, showed himself to the dogs to draw their attention away from the pen. The dogs were let loose and started to chase Fox, with the men galloping after them on horseback, and sounding the bugle.

By this time, Badger and the captive foxes had managed to make a large enough hole to allow the foxes to escape.

'Mrs Fox, take everyone to the woods and wait where you left your children,' ordered Badger.

'But, Badger, I need to save Fox,' she argued.

'The state you are all in, it's best to leave this to me. You need



to get to safety,' he replied. 'Don't worry, I will bring him home safely.'

As Mrs Fox and the others started to head towards the woods, a screeching sound was heard overhead. It was Owl, with what seemed like a hundred other birds following him, and they started diving down at the dogs and the huntsmen on their horses.

This gave Badger time to run over to find Mr Fox and make their escape into the safety of the woods, knowing that the dogs would not be able to follow.

On their way, Badger tripped over a molehill and fell face-first into a cowpat. Fox was running as fast as he could, so he didn't see what had happened to Badger.

After he had thanked his bird friends, Owl flew back to join the foxes in the woods, and they all made their way back to Mrs Badger.

After half an hour, everyone at the badger sett was getting worried as Badger hadn't come back.

'I will fly around and look for him,' volunteered Owl.

But just as Owl was about to leave, Badger came through the trees looking rather a mess, and not smelling very nice, either. Everyone looked at Badger and laughed, but although he smelled bad, he was greeted like a hero with hugs and kisses. 'I need some sleep — I am bushed,' said Badger.

'Not until you go down to the pond and have a wash,' said Mrs Badger.

As Badger walked wearily to the pond where the ripples were shimmering in the sunlight, he was joined by his two best friends, Owl and Fox.

'Well, Badger,' said Owl, 'what a night!'

'Yes,' said a weary Badger, 'but at least everyone is safe, and all the foxes are free to roam the countryside again.'

'Maybe we should take this up for a living,' said Fox.

Hearing this, Badger pushed Fox into the water and jumped in after him.

And Owl — he just laughed!



The End

Managing Council Tax Bills

Karen Thomas

I've recently found myself living alone after the breakdown of my relationship. My council tax bill is due soon, and I'm worried I won't be able to afford to pay it on my own. I'm already struggling to cover the cost of my other bills. What can I do?

You're not alone in worrying about struggling to pay your bills. It's a difficult time for people who are battling rising costs for food and essentials – as well as seeing their bills creep up. Fortunately, there are options available to people struggling to pay their council tax, but you'll need to find out if you're eligible first. You might be entitled to pay less, or not at all, depending on your circumstances, because councils offer discounts and other reductions.

Firstly, because you're the only adult living in your home, your council tax bill can be reduced by a quarter. For example, if your bill is £1,000 for the year, you'll only have to pay £750 now that you live on your own. You'll need to tell your council someone has moved out of your home and the date that they left. You're entitled to the discount from when they moved out – even if it was a while ago.

When the council works out how many people live in a property, there are certain people that don't count – they called 'disregarded people'. This includes under 18s, full-time students, long-term hospital patients, people with severe mental impairments, and many more. You can check our website for more information on disregarded people at <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/council-tax/check-if-you-can-pay-less-council-tax/>. In Wales, some care leavers (under the age of 24) are disregarded too.

In some situations, everyone living in a home is disregarded. If this is the case, the council tax bill will be reduced by half. If everyone in a home is a student or severely mentally impaired, there'll be no council tax to pay. If you live with an adult who isn't disregarded, but who is on a low income or receives certain benefits, you might be able to get a discount called a 'second adult rebate'. You can find out more about getting a second adult rebate on our website <https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/housing/council-tax/check-if-you-can-get-a-second-adult-rebate-on-your-council-tax/>.

you-can-get-a-second-adult-rebate-on-your-council-tax/ If you or someone you live with is disabled, this can also affect your council tax banding. If your home has been adapted, you can ask to be placed down one band. For example, if you're living in a band C property that has been adapted for a disabled resident, you should only be charged council tax for a Band B property.

There's also something called Council Tax Reduction, which is designed for people on low incomes. Your council will ask for details about your income and circumstances, to check if you're eligible. If you are, they'll reduce the amount of council tax you have to pay.

When it comes to Council Tax Reductions, different rules apply depending on whether you've reached State Pension age. You can check your State Pension age on GOV.UK at <https://www.gov.uk/state-pension-age>

And lastly, if you're struggling to pay for essentials, your council can reduce your bill further, or cancel it altogether, under what's known as a 'discretionary reduction'. This usually only happens if you can provide evidence that you're suffering severe hardship and can't afford to pay council tax. If you're in this situation, ask your council for help.

If you're not given a discretionary reduction, you might be able to appeal to a valuation tribunal. If the tribunal agrees with you, they can order your council to reduce or even cancel your council tax bill. You can find out more about how to appeal at <https://valuationtribunal.gov.uk/>

Whatever circumstances you're in, if you're struggling with your council tax payments, it's important to let your council know. You can find your council's contact details at <https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>. Citizens Advice is also here to help you find a way forward, should you need our support.



Companies House Verification

Carol Draper



As the government continues its inexorable journey towards online filing, there are big changes afoot at Companies House. To reduce fraud and improve the reliability of data, it will be a legal requirement from 18th November 2025 for all directors and Persons with Significant Control (PSCs) to verify their identity with Companies House. All companies are required to have a registered email address logged with Companies House. If that is your email address, you will have received an email from Companies House explaining the process and providing links to help verify your identity. It is not junk-mail, so don't ignore it. If you believe you are affected and have not received an email, search "verify your identity for Companies House" for more details. Once your identity has been verified, you will be given an 11-digit unique code that is personal to you. From 18th November, this code will be required to link your verified identity to each company role you hold, whether that is in one company or many. There are two ways to complete identity verification and obtain your personal code. Either you can use the "Verify your identity for Companies House service" or you can ask an Authorised Corporate Service Provider (ACSP), generally an accountant or solicitor, to verify your identity with Companies House on your

behalf. Either way, you will need recognised identity documents that are approved by Companies House. Once 18th November has passed, it will not be possible to submit confirmation statements, register a new company or be appointed to a new company without approved identity verification for all directors and PSCs. Personal information, for example: dates of birth, needs to match the details held by Companies House, or it will not be possible to link your verified identity to your company role. Incorrect details on Companies House will need to be changed to allow online filing after 18th November, so it is worth checking and making any required adjustments now. If you need more information about the coming changes, want to know when the absolute deadline is for you to verify your identity or require help completing identification, speak to your accountant.

Carol Draper FCCA
Clifton-Crick Sharp & Co Ltd

'The first step toward change is awareness.'

Nathaniel Branden



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Short Fiction Competition Winner!

The Quiet Mosaic:

A Day in the Life of an Introvert

Congratulations to Jack Coldicott, winner of our August-September short fiction competition! Thank you to everyone who submitted a piece of writing to us. We received many strong and insightful entries! Coldicott's entry takes the top spot for its thoughtful pace, confident authorial voice, and acute eye for details in seemingly quiet or overlooked moments in life.

Mornings always arrived gently for Rowan, seeping in through the curtains in slivers of pale gold. The world outside his room stirred and clattered into motion, but inside, everything remained tranquil. He woke without an alarm - just the natural rhythm of his body, which preferred the hush before the town demanded a voice.

Rowan wandered barefoot to the kitchen, where the kettle's soft whistle was the first sound of the day. He watched tiny bubbles form in the water, relishing the slow, deliberate ritual of preparing tea. At the window, he cradled the warm mug in his hands, tracing shapes in the clouds and observing the flutter of birds on telephone wires. In these moments, the world was distant

and beautifully bearable.

He worked from home as a freelance writer, his desk positioned perfectly to catch the dappled light drifting through the leaves. His laptop opened, emails blinked in, but he answered them methodically - a reply, a pause, a breath. Conversations here were clean and manageable, words typed rather than spoken.

Occasionally, a phone call loomed, and Rowan rehearsed lines in his head, summoning the courage to pick up and speak. When the conversation ended, he felt the relief of silence settle, a familiar blanket.

At lunchtime, Rowan retreated to the sanctuary of a book. The characters' lives unfolded without expectation, their voices humming safely between pages. Sometimes,

he journaled his thoughts, the scratch of pen on paper soothing as rain against a windowpane. He wrote lists of things he noticed - a new flower in the neighbour's garden, the subtle shift in the sky's hue, the gentle thrum of passing cars.

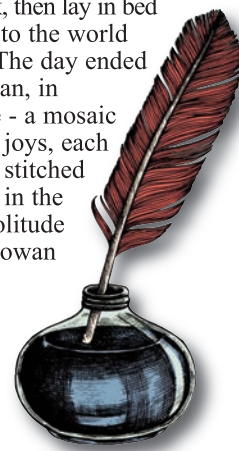
The afternoon brought a walk to the nearby park, where Rowan moved among people without mingling. He watched - children darting after pigeons, friends laughing on benches, dogs tugging at leashes. No one expected conversation; he was an observer, content in his quiet orbit. He found a secluded spot under an oak tree and listened to the wind threading through branches.

Back at home, Rowan cooked dinner with the radio murmuring in the background—a blend of music and soft-spoken news.

He found comfort in these gentle sounds, filling his space without overwhelming it. He ate at the kitchen table, savouring the meal, the solitude, the dusk blooming outside.

As evening deepened, invitations flickered on his phone. He responded kindly but declined, choosing instead a video call with his sister or sending a thoughtful message to a friend. Connections, he knew, could be tender and light - woven softly, never forced.

Night fell, and Rowan lit a candle, letting the glow dance on the walls. He read a little more, sketched in the margins of his notebook, then lay in bed listening to the world exhale. The day ended as it began, in quietude - a mosaic of small joys, each moment stitched together in the gentle solitude where Rowan thrived.



Literacy in England

According to a 2024 study by the National Literacy Trust, 18% of adults in England (roughly 6.6 million people) have very poor literacy skills. They can be described as 'functionally illiterate', having a loose grasp of written language, but struggling with daily acts of reading that the majority of us don't think twice about. Functional illiteracy is particularly damaging when it hinders someone's ability to understand legal, financial, or employment-related documents. Improving this national situation is made more challenging by the fact that functionally illiterate people often hide that they're struggling. Read Easy South Worcestershire (covering Worcester City, Evesham, Broadway and surrounding Wychavon villages) is an example of a local group tackling this problem by helping adults learn to read. Moreover, while the vast majority of us are literate, we may not all share a passion for literacy.

The Reading Agency reported that 'only 50% of UK adults now read regularly for pleasure, down from 58% in 2015' and that

'[y]oung UK adults (16-24) face the most barriers to reading books, with 24% saying they've never been regular readers'. We have so many online alternatives at our fingertips, such as social media platforms or streaming services to pass the time, which - in previous generations - might have been filled with reading. Lots of reading is still being done, but because so much information is now available, its form and quality are far more variable. We have become increasingly literate in a language of images and icons which can convey meaning more immediately than a paragraph of text ever could. In an age where our literacy levels are so high, it is perhaps only natural that more people take reading for granted and do not love it. That is not to say it isn't unfortunate. More unfortunate still, 6.6 million people cannot participate in it at all.

For information about volunteering opportunities at Read Easy South Worcestershire, visit www.readeasy.org.uk/groups/southworcestershire

Poem for the Editor

Mornings

Come on, get up, you're going to be late,
Come on, get up, it's a quarter to eight,
I butter the toast,
I make the tea,
I feed the cat,
I have coffee,
Then down the stairs, the children come,
Yawning wide, "Where's my breakfast, Mum?"
"Where's my shoes?"
"Where's my tie?"
"Do my hair." I hear them cry.
Stand still, be brave, do up your coat,
"Oh, Mum, I'm tired. I've got a sore throat."
Then off to school, off they all ran.
Just a minute, where's my old man?
Come on, get up, you're going to be late,
Come on, get up, it's half past eight.

By Christine Daly

From the Boundary

Peter Jewell



Well, I was right that Worcestershire might have a chance! The top players were playing in the one day test and the 100. They were in the final

of the one day Cup and the weather did not look good, but once again, it worked to their advantage. Well done to them, they won! Why are we playing

cricket in late September? Now, for England, they lost the first two games against South Africa. Why? The 100 and non-competitive 50 over games. But they have come good with some amazing performances from Phil Salt, Jofra Archer and, of course, the legendary Joe Root. I think England will beat the Aussies in their own back yard and Joe Root will get even closer to Tendulkar's amazing record. I am impressed with the quality of the Women's Rugby World Cup. England in the Final against Canada. England will have to play out of their skins to beat Canada. Good luck, England, I will report on it in my next article.



Here is a new one! Should we leave the clocks as they are? Whether we change them or not, we get up in the dark. Most would get up at, say, 6:30 or even as late as 7:30. It is dark either way, but if we did not change the clocks, it would be dark at 5:30 to 5:45 in the afternoon, allowing children to do some sporting activities after school and be better for it. *Let's do a reader survey. Email the editor on a simple 'yes' or 'no' to changing the clocks and why.*

A View from the Middle

It is the worst of ironies that, having spent a number of my columns discussing suicide prevention and how we might all be kinder to each other, this month I lost a friend that way.

For that reason, this month's column has been difficult to write and is shorter than normal. What I would like it to be is a shopping list of methods - in no particular order - that I use when my mental health is bad in the hope that it might help others avoid such a tragedy.

My first option is to rest. My dad always used to tell me that things would be better in the morning. He may not always have been right, but I was usually better rested and refuelled, ready to face whatever was going on. Humans are a bit like computers in that way - some problems can be resolved just by switching off and then back on again.

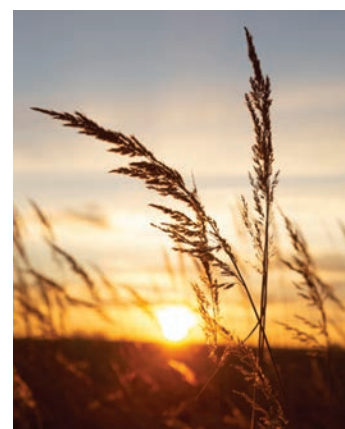
My second option is comfort food. My mum's spaghetti bolognese was my favourite food growing up, and the smell of cooking onions, garlic and tomatoes brings me right back to the warmth of her kitchen. There is something about following steps and making something out of disconnected ingredients that is very satisfying and cheers me up. If I am too low even to cook, then ready meals, cereals, or takeaways help too. The important thing is to take fuel on board, particularly sugar and carbs, I find!

After fuelling with sleep and food, my next option is to move. When feeling down or anxious, I find that my brain is going 100mph, and I get jittery, so putting that energy into an outside walk or indoor workout really alleviates the tension in my body. It also helps me remember there is a world outside of my bedroom and it is often beautiful.

Finally, I always try to reach out for help, whether this be from a professional or a friend. It is important to let people know if you're feeling down so they can help the best way they can.

This can just be by giving a bit more time and patience, or even bringing you home to stay at their house and be looked after. The important thing is to remember that you're not alone. Even the worst of problems are better shared. They do say that a problem solved is a problem halved. If you can't think of anyone to call, then there are a number of helplines you can call (or text). I will close with those and send you all best wishes and encouragement to take care of yourselves and each other.

You can text "SHOUT" to 85258
You can call Samaritans on 116 123 or
email jo@samaritans.org



You can call the NHS on 111
In the evenings, you can call Campaign Against Living Miserably on 0800 585858 or check out their web chat or call SOS Silence of Suicide on 0800 1151505.

For young people:
Childline on 0800 1111 (call) or Paparyus on 0800 068 41 41 (call) or 07860 039967 (text)

Thoughts from the Snug . . The new (revised) Highway Code

Prompted by a letter to the editor, a discussion on the new Highway Code sparked a lively debate in the Snug. When most of us passed their driving test, the Highway Code was a sixteen-page pamphlet containing illustrations of road signs and the odd imperative that described safe driving. Once we had passed our test, most of us admitted we rarely, if ever, studied the document again. How things have changed and need to change!

The new edition (the seventeenth since the 1930s) is now a 160+ page book. The colourful road

signs and simple diagrams of road junctions and roundabouts still remain, but 90% of the publication details what you must do and what you must not do in over 300 rules.

The code itself is not a legal document, but it does contain many rules that are supported by law, primarily concerned with driving without care and attention. Frankly, whilst it is not a difficult or overly technical read, it is rather boring and tedious, and that partially explains why so many drivers have failed to update themselves. The government's own website

(www.gov.uk) admits 40% of drivers have little or no awareness of the new, revised code. Indeed, if we include other road users (including, cyclists, motorcyclists, horse riders and pedestrians), we estimate the level of unawareness is likely to exceed 80% of the population. This lack of awareness is a worry to many of us.

We could, unwittingly, easily be breaking the law and being fined or punished. As we left the Snug that evening, a (sober) local drove away from the car park after giving us a friendly smile, wave of her hand,

a flash of headlights and a cheerful beep on the horn. "That's at least three rules she's broken already," observed one onlooker. Thank goodness they were not on a cycle or a horse! Those rules are even more complex and obscure. More Highway Code revision in this publication will follow, but, in the meantime, we suggest visiting one of the many websites that test and help revise the new changes. It's more enjoyable than ploughing through 160 pages of this document.

Buddy Bach

The revised Highway Code: It's not just for drivers!

As mentioned in this month's 'Thoughts from the Snug', there is a huge lack of awareness of the revised Highway Code, and the consequences of falling foul of the revised rules could result in drivers being punished with some serious penalties. Several national papers feature articles concerning these changes, as research tells us over 40% of drivers have little or no awareness of the changes. It is now too easy to be caught out. As a public service, we are going to publicise some of these changes in short articles over the next few editions of our local paper. Let's start with:

Driving Without Care and Attention (also referred to as 'Dangerous Driving'):

There are so many new rules, all backed by law, that cover

these offences, it's best to summarise them. *All can result in three to nine penalty points, up to £5000 fine and or a disqualification, depending on the severity of the reckless behaviour.*

Furthermore, any conviction is logged on your licence and needs to be declared to your insurance company. Ignoring the Highway Code can be expensive

Inappropriate behaviour: Speeding, drink driving, eating, lighting a cigarette, using a mobile, hogging the middle lane or aggressive driving, tailgating, driving too slowly, overloading with passengers or cargo, not wearing seatbelts or inappropriate seating for children. The driver is generally held responsible for all these matters.

Poor observation:

Driving with an obscured windscreen or front seat windows, e.g. ice-up or misty, colliding with a pedestrian or cyclist or ignoring traffic signs.

Manoeuvring:

Overtaking on the inside or performing an inappropriate manoeuvre, e.g. reversing on a motorway.

This is not an exhaustive list.

There are, frankly, too many to list in this article, but if you want to find out more, go to a website that tests highway code knowledge. This is far more entertaining and enjoyable than ploughing through 300+ revised rules of a 160-page book. By the way, it is generally acknowledged that those who have recently passed their theory test score better in awareness than so-called experienced drivers, but even



they sometimes fail to observe the code. There is no room for complacency.

Next edition: Driving with Animals and Children. Some tricky rules to observe here. *Highway code books are available for around £5 from most good booksellers.*

It is free online at www.gov.uk

Richard Catford

What's on . . .

Live Jazz

Wednesday 1st October

featuring the Trio led by the very talented pianist Rich Hughes, plus lyrical singer Penny Powell

Music starts 7.30pm

**The Fox & Hounds
Pub/Restaurant**

**Church Street
Bredon GL20 7LA**



u3a
Pershore & District

Monthly Meeting

Tuesday 21st October at 2pm
When you hear church bells ringing, do you ever wonder ...Who, How & Why? Come along and find out from members of the Pershore Abbey team and other local bell ringers

Tuesday 18th November at 2pm
More bees if you please, Take 2 Come along and find out more about the life and behaviour of bees from horticulturist and bee keeper, Fiona Gibson

All welcome, including non-members
Meetings held at Number 8, High Street, Pershore
For more details, contact Sally Whyte
Speaker Coordinator on
email: u3apershoresally@gmail.com
www.pershore.u3asite.uk

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For more information and booking please visit www.hollandhouse.org

A Gallimaufry of Ideas



October is both an end and a beginning. On the one hand, the delights of Summer have now passed, but equally we have the joys of the Festive Season to look forward to. Even before that, this month in fact, it's already half-term, which poses the perennial question: what to do with the kids? Well, here's a partial answer...

Recently, we revisited Kenilworth Castle, which is less than an hour away, but which we found full of interest for all ages. (I often feel that English Heritage, the site custodians, have the 'hard' end of the Heritage deal because they have to look after lots of historically significant ruins, which are, alas, just that, whereas the National Trust does have the cream of country houses for us to wander around.) But Kenilworth Castle manages to be both historically significant and a good, interesting day out. It was famously the scene of the – apparently unconsummated – romance between Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and Queen Elizabeth the First. Started in the 1120s, the Norman

Great Tower still stands today. Added to by such famous men as John of Gaunt and King Henry the Fifth, it was given to Dudley by the Queen herself, so he thereupon converted the Castle into a great showpiece, culminating in a fabulous series of entertainments lasting some 19 days in 1575. Alas, he must have been a little over the top because Lizzie was having none of it and seems to have flounced off in a bit of a huff. Today at the Castle, but only until the end of half-term week, you can see a fascinating art installation called the 'Wicked Game' which was commissioned especially to mark the 450th anniversary of the events of 1575. It's certainly thought-provoking. There's a lot more to see and do while you're there, and we've always enjoyed taking the grandkids there.

For details of the Castle and the other sites in their care, see www.english-heritage.org.uk Now for a quick change of pace, from the remarkably old to the currently trending. Have you heard of EDTs? No, well, let me

enlighten you. It's the acronym for Extreme Day Trips, the idea of having a 'holiday in a day' by flying out of, and back to, a local airport to a tourist destination, all in a long day. It sounds a bit daft at first, but a lot of people are cottoning on to the idea, especially if you have a full-time job and spare cash, but not much spare time. So, for example, you can fly from Birmingham to Malaga and back for £45, leaving at 6 am on EasyJet and returning at 23:45 on Ryanair, giving you just under 12 hours on the ground at Malaga. This example is bookable on the 29th of next month (November). Not only is it a nice city, Picasso's birthplace no less, but it also gives you a chance at some Christmas shopping with a difference and the opportunity of topping up your tan on the nearby beaches. Or, if you should fancy a city break, how about the Romanian capital, Bucharest, for a long day trip, again from Birmingham? Ryanair again, out at 6:25 and back at 23:50, giving an on-the-ground time of just shy of eleven hours. That

Brian Johnson-Thomas

trip will cost you just £55, travelling on the 9th November. Again, think of the chance to get some really different presents for friends and family as well as the fun of quickly exploring this quirky city (you simply must go and see the biggest parliament building in the world – love it or hate it!). Finally, a quick third example, Barcelona on December 12th, leaving at 5 am and returning at 22:25, again EasyJet out and Ryanair home. That gives you just shy of 13 hours in Barcelona for just £44. Time to see Gaudi's work in all its glory, sample a proper paella over a long, lingering lunch and, again, just think of the shopping... *If this 'holidaying' concept appeals to you, then there's now a new website specially for you called EDT Flights from, wait for it, www.extremedaytrips.com* At the time of writing, they were showing ten day trips from Birmingham starting at just £30, and they update the site quite frequently. Who knows? We might meet in the departure lounge sooner than you think.



You could catch a glimpse of the biggest parliament building in the world and be back in time for tea!

Give a hog a home!

Karen Rose

October is a month for the senses. Trees begin to colour, there are smells of wet and decay as plants die back, of fungi in the woods, of damp moss and ferns. Wildlife prepares for winter, with squirrels burying nuts, some birds migrating, and others arriving from colder regions, to feast on Autumn seeds and berries. And hedgehogs will be looking for a cosy place to curl up for their long winter sleep. Hedgehogs are one of our best-loved UK species, yet their numbers are declining at an alarming rate, from thirty million in 1950 to an estimated one million now. Thankfully,

though, we can help them bounce back. Provide a home which is somewhere safe for them to shelter, hibernate and raise hoglets in the Spring. Log and leaf piles, wilderness areas and purpose-built hedgehog homes make great places for hedgehogs to nest and hibernate. Let them roam! Adult hedgehogs travel between 1-2km per night, hoovering up slugs, beetles and snails. This means they range over entire housing estates and neighbourhoods, so get together with neighbours to connect your gardens with hedgehog 'holes' in the boundaries to make hedgehog highways. And



finally, with Halloween and bonfire night fast approaching, check for hidden hedgehogs before lighting bonfires!

Karen Rose is a biodiversity officer for Wychavon District Council.

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Calling All Writers!

**Christmas Short Story
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***Have you got a Christmas story
you've always wanted to share
with readers?***



*The winning entry will
be published in the
December/January
Magazine!*



Word Count:

Up to 500 words

***Please hand in or email your submissions to:
news@hughes.company
(including your name)***

Deadline:

Monday 17th November

Hughes & Company

8 Church Street, Pershore, Worcestershire WR10 1DT

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Jazz News

Peter Farrall

Mention the name TJ Johnson to any Pershore Jazz fan and it will produce a big smile and words of praise and appreciation. TJ has been a favourite here ever since his first appearance at Pershore Jazz Festival, when it was still held in the marquee (shared with the Flower and Craft Show) at rear of the Angel Hotel. He is recognised as one of the country's finest jazz and blues vocalists, but his repertoire extends to country, folk, soul, gospel - in fact, any tune that attracts him will be adapted to the charismatic Johnson style of presentation. As a young lad, TJ taught himself to play piano and by the early teens was to be seen in jazz groups around his locality. Drummer Pete Cotterill (whose son, Jack, has made appearances at Pershore Jazz Festival and Club) steered him in the direction of Australian trombonist, Max Collie, and by the age of sixteen, TJ was touring with the legendary Max Collie Rhythm Aces. Eventually forming his own band, he spent some years touring jazz clubs and festivals, all the time perfecting his

repertoire and presentation to produce an act which appeals to fans right across the jazz audience spectrum. A move to London and recruitment of top echelon musicians increased recognition, and soon the TJ Johnson band was regularly seen in many prestigious jazz venues, like the 100 club, Pizza Express, and Ronnie Scott's - where they have played to a full house on more than eleven occasions. It's good to know that the band still includes provincial clubs and festivals in their itinerary, and they can always look forward to a warm and appreciative welcome in Pershore. Our club night this month will feature TJ and his band of top London musicians. Think likes of Ray Charles, Louis Armstrong, BB King or Nina Simone; all delivered in his very intimate and exciting stage manner. Now, you have an idea of what to expect from this charismatic pianist and singer, who can change between honey-voiced crooner to wailing blues shouter with consummate ease, bringing a programme of jazz, blues, gospel, soul and much more.



The T.J. Johnson Band

Wednesday 29th October

Function Room, Pershore Football Club

Doors open at 7pm, Music starts at 8pm

Admission £12.50 (to include a raffle ticket)

Book in advance and pay on arrival

Email: club@pershorejazz.org.uk Tel: 01527 66692

or find us on Facebook.

Music Matters

Steve Ide

Paul McCartney announced an intimate gig this week as a warm up for his upcoming tour. One of the stipulations for the concert is that all phones will be stored in secure pouches for the duration of the gig and can only be accessed in designated phone-use areas. This idea of phone-free concerts is becoming more common lately, with artists such as Billie Elish, Bob Dylan, Jack White, Bruno Mars and Gorillaz doing similar. Many artists have commented about phones spoiling the enjoyment of a live event. Hak Baker wrote the song 'Telephones for eyes' about staring out to an audience of mobile phones. While it's nice to have a photo as a memento of a happy time, we miss so much when we try to document everything that happens. Live events are supposed to be a unique moment in time. Better to be fully engaged, than to miss the atmosphere because you want to share clips on social media.

Notable new albums

Euro-Country
by CMAT

This is the third album from Irish musician CMAT. With songs that are instantly catchy and well thought out lyrics, this is an exceptional album. Her unique voice delivers truly personal songs in a highly relatable way. Standout track: 'When a good man cries'

Antidepressants
by Suede

The band may have peaked in the 1990s but have never gone away. And from the evidence of this album, they've not lost their creative drive. An edgy collection with some killer riffs, Brett Anderson still thrills in midlife. Stand out track: 'Antidepressants'

Alberone
by Baxter Dury
This is Baxter's ninth studio album, and features his

trademark poetic lyrics, clever world play, coupled with his deadpan delivery over a modern disco beat. Standout track: 'Kubla Khan'

Who is the sky
by David Byrne

The latest release from the Talking Heads frontman. This is David enjoying the strangeness of modern life. Uplifting and joyful. Stand out track: 'Everybody laughs'

Add to playlist

Sunshine on Leith
by The Proclaimers

Maps
by Yeah Yeah Yeahs

Los Angeles
by Big Thief

Free
by Sault

Concrete Schoolyard
by Jurassic 5

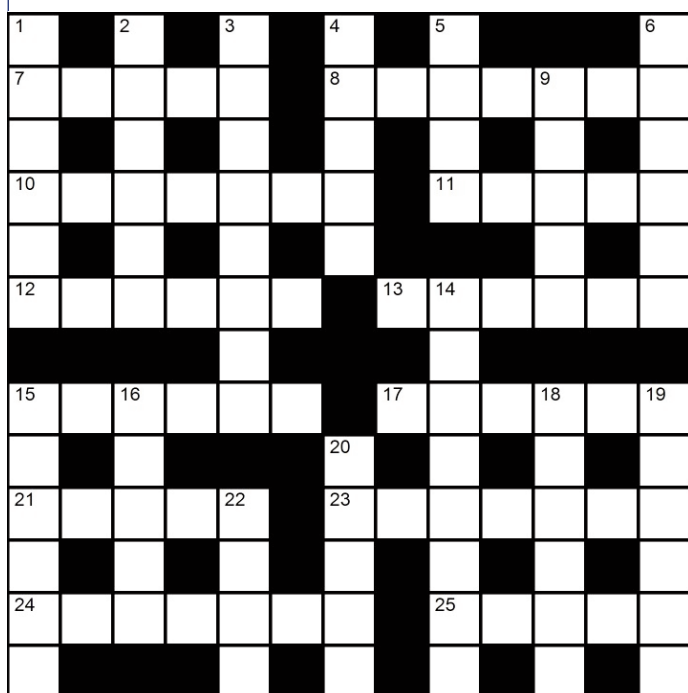


'One of my biggest thrills for me still is sitting down with a guitar or a piano and just out of nowhere trying to make a song happen.'

Paul McCartney

Coffee Break

Crossword



Across

- 7 Elude (5)
 8 Love affair (7)
 10 Obscurity (7)
 11 High building (5)
 12 Pastry (6)
 13 Actor (6)
 15 Mock (6)
 17 Expels (6)
 21 Pole thrown by Scottish athletes (5)
 23 Youngster just walking (7)
 24 End result (7)
 25 Recess in a wall (5)

Down

- 1 Anise-flavoured liqueur (6)
 2 Nationalist China (6)
 3 Freed (8)
 4 Forest (5)
 5 Send forth (4)
 6 Closer (6)
 9 Recently (5)
 14 Cherished relation (5,3)
 15 Physician (6)
 16 Capital of Morocco (5)
 18 Plain-woven cotton cloth (6)
 19 Loud shrill cry (6)
 20 Refined iron (5)
 22 Chess piece (4)

Sudoku

Each row and column must contain the numbers from one to nine, without repetitions.

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

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

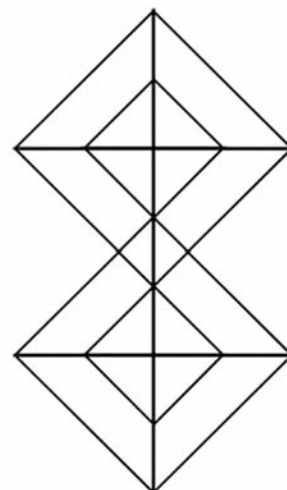
U	N	E	L	L	N	G	R	W	T	T
R	S	K	Y	S	L	E	E	Z	B	S
E	D	E	K	G	T	N	E	S	R	E
T	L	O	N	A	A	K	B	U	B	N
T	E	G	I	R	E	D	O	B	Q	S
E	I	N	S	T	D	D	R	O	A	E
W	W	E	O	P	O	A	L	E	N	T
Y	C	I	S	W	F	V	S	X	H	K
S	T	U	N	Y	L	A	X	S	U	M
N	O	S	B	G	O	D	I	A	A	D
W	Q	Q	R	E	X	W	I	F	E	M

ANEW
 ASSAM
 BAT
 BY FAR
 CUBE
 DO IT
 DOG
 DOWNS
 EBB
 EELS
 EWING
 EX-WIFE
 INKY
 INS
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Brainteaser

How many triangles can you see?



Poets' Corner

A Shropshire Lad

LI

Loitering with a vacant eye
Along the Grecian gallery,
And brooding on my heavy ill,
I met a statue standing still.
Still in marble stone stood he,
And stedfastly he looked at me.
"Well met," I thought the look would say,
"We both were fashioned far away;
We neither knew, when we were young,
These Londoners we live among."

Still he stood and eyed me hard,
An earnest and a grave regard:
"What, lad, drooping with your lot?
I too would be where I am not.
I too survey that endless line
Of men whose thoughts are not as mine.
Years, ere you stood up from rest,
On my neck the collar prest;
Years, when you lay down your ill,
I shall stand and bear it still.
Courage, lad, 'tis not for long:
Stand, quit you like stone, be strong."
So I thought his look would say;
And light on me my trouble lay,
And I slept out in flesh and bone
Manful like the man of stone.

A. E. Housman 1859-1936

Quiz!

1. The Blue Meanies were the enemy of the Beatles in which film.
2. What song is most commonly sung to celebrate someone getting a year older?
3. Who composed the songs 'Puttin on the ritz', 'I've got my love to keep me warm' and 'White Christmas'?
4. What is the name of the Dutch footballer who transferred from Arsenal to Man Utd in Aug 2012 for £23 million?
5. How many sides does an icosagon have?
6. Which large animal is the only creature thought to produce its own sun tan lotion from its natural secretions?
7. In a musical about gangsters, who are with the guys in the title?
8. Which Greek author was famous for his fables?
9. Which 1988 western saw Emilio Estevez play 'Billy The Kid' alongside Charlie Sheen and Kiefer Sutherland?
10. Which Russian punk band were jailed for two years in Aug 2012 for their anti-Putin protest and inciting hooliganism in an orthodox church?
11. Which historical region of Greece includes the capital, Athens?
12. Glenridding and Pooley Bridge stand at opposite ends of which lake, the 2nd largest in the Lake District?
13. Where in London is there a bronze statue of Charlie Chaplin?
14. What is the name of the actress who played Hilda Ogden in Coronation Street?
15. Who is reported to have played his fiddle while Rome burned?
16. What is the surname of the inventor of the worlds first motorcycle?
17. Which song from 'Joseph and his technicolour dreamcoat' gave Jason Donovan a No 1 UK hit in 1991?
18. Which TV show from the '70s and 80's featured Michael Langdon as Charles Ingalls living on a farm with his wife and 4 daughters?
19. In which country did Posh and Becks marry?

Answers: 1. The Yellow Submarine 2. Happy Birthday 3. Irving Berlin 4. Robin Van Persie 5. 20 6. Hippopotamus 7. Dolls 8. Aesop 9. Young Guns 10. Pussy Riot 11. Attica 12. Ullswater 13. Leicester Square 14. Jean Alexander 15. Nero 16. Daimler 17. Any dream will do 18. Little house on the prairie 19. Ireland

September Answers



September Brain teaser: 38 triangles

Did You Know?

'Souling' was a precursor to today's Trick-or-Treating. In Medieval Europe, beggars would go around door to door on 1st November, asking for food in exchange for prayers for the dead.

Word of the Month

'Campestral'

Definition: of, like, or pertaining to open fields or the countryside

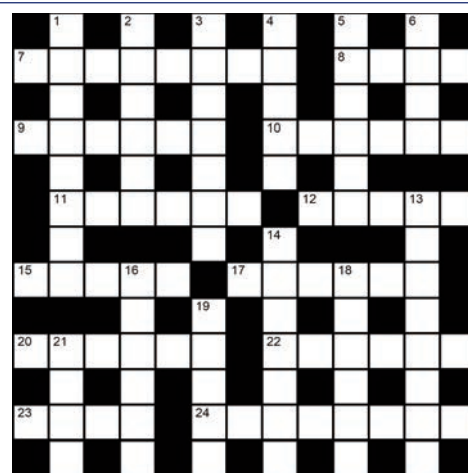
Anagram Crossword

Across

- 7 Barnacle (8)
- 8 Hide (4)
- 9 Strake (6)
- 10 Brooke (6)
- 11 End use (6)
- 12 Betsy (3,2)
- 15 Dusty (5)
- 17 Horsed (6)
- 20 Manual (6)
- 22 Pantied (6)
- 23 Erin (2,2)
- 24 Phonetic (8)

Down

- 1 Brackets (8)
- 2 Spates (6)
- 3 Cartels (7)
- 4 Carbs (5)
- 5 Hovers (6)
- 6 Eels (4)
- 13 Barges in (8)
- 14 Soupcon (7)
- 16 Embody (6)
- 18 Deuced (6)
- 19 Palms (5)
- 21 Leon (4)



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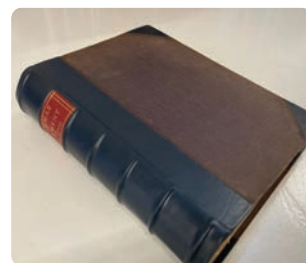
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**Copy Deadline for
October Issue - 20th October 2025**

Severn Stoke & Croome D'abitot News

Happenings in Severn Stoke and Environs

John Henderson

St. Denys' Church, Severn Stoke

We are arranging to have stonework repairs to the West Window at last and we await a quote for further roof repairs, all taking up our carefully conserved savings from income collections and public generosity. The Church is always open from 9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. every day for those seeking peace and tranquillity from everyday worries and concerns.

Friends Of St. Denys, Severn Stoke

Raising funds to modernise the

church! The craft fair in St Denys' Church, Severn Stoke on 20th September was very well attended and congratulations to all who gave their time and offerings to make it a success. There were delightful and useful things to buy and many thanks to the Stallholders for all their wonderful and varied items. The event raised a fantastic £944 towards church funds. The new Portaloo, in its temporary position, was unveiled in time for the event and, we are delighted to say, used conveniently.

Advance Notice:

The traditional 'Carols at The Nash' will be held there, by kind permission of Drs. M&K Sweeney on Friday 8th December at 7.30 p.m.

The Chase Brass Band will accompany us as usual, with Carols and readings, followed by delicious seasonal light refreshments.

Tickets at £12.00 each will be available for purchase in November.



Kempsey WI

In September, Kempsey WI members celebrated the start of Autumn with their Annual Harvest Lunch. As usual, everyone brought a plate of food to share, and it was up to its usual high standard, with a variety of savoury and sweet delights. While people were eating, there was a chance to discuss forthcoming events, including the Kempsey Fun Dog Show, which the WI was supporting by providing a stand selling doggy treats and knitted toy dogs made by members, along with a competition to guess the name of one of the knitted puppies. The October meeting on Monday 20th will be different to the usual format. It will be an open meeting to which other villagers interested in finding out about antiques are invited. Nigel Christie will be relating stories about antiques

and collectables, tracing their history and giving tips on what to look for when buying. The cost for non-members of the WI will be £5, to include tea, coffee and biscuits. It starts at 2pm, at the Youth Centre in Plovers Rise. Details can be found on notices around the village, or ring WI secretary, Judy, on 01905 821800.

In early October, look out for WI members around the village drawing attention to the state of our rivers. You will see them carrying banners and testing water for pollution, as part of the WI's national Rivers Action campaign, highlighting the poor state of many waterways.



Letter to the editor

Dear Editor,

As Chairman of the Norton Horticultural Society, I would like to thank all those who took part in our Plant Sale. The sale, plus donations, raised sufficient funds to buy 40 new chairs for

the Beechill Room at St James Church.

Particular thanks to Ian and Ann, who grew a large number of very healthy plants for the sale.

Christopher Porter

TOOLS WITH A MISSION

This charity collects and refurbishes gardening, carpentry, building tools, sewing machines and bicycles for distribution in Africa.

We collect them here in Kempsey and send them to a national centre to be shipped to needy families.

Please telephone Joy Clee 01905 820317

Spot & Shop - September Winners

- | | |
|------------------|---------------------|
| 1) J.K. Baines | 5) Sylvia Pouncett |
| 2) S.P. Lowe | 6) Stewart Donnelly |
| 3) John Beeton | 7) Brenda Smith |
| 4) Teresa Atkins | |

Last month's answer:
JDS Electrical



COMPETITION TIME!

Take a look at the anagram
The answer is the name of a business that is advertising in the Kempsey Times this month

- This month's prizes!
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 - 6th Reg Moule Gardening Book
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Camera Club



'Edge of Reality' by Jane Winter FRPS

With the onset of wind and rain, it is quite evidently the end of summer, so we hope that you might have some time (and greater willingness) to stay indoors and take advantage of the interesting evenings (as well as continuing outdoor activities) which the Club is able to offer.

In October, our new season continues on Wednesday 8th October 2025 with our first photographic competition. The medium is Digital Images, the subject is 'Open' and the judge is Barbie Lindsey.

Barbie is an enthusiastic and creative photographer, who has visited us before, so we look forward to hearing her critiques. We have an unexpected second meeting of the month on Wednesday 15th October, when the talk by

Gerry Coe FRPS on the subject of 'iPhone Art', which was disrupted and eventually stopped by problems with the internet on 10th September, should be able to proceed (with a number of back-up procedures to ease that for us). This will be followed, as the final meeting of the month, with a talk on 22nd October, by Neil Scott FRPS, on the subject of "Minimalism in Photography - an approach to simplicity in photographic images", an interest for many in the Club. We would be delighted to welcome anybody interested to either of the evenings listed above; please make contact via our website (www.kempseycameraclub.uk/), where you will also find further details of our programme for the rest of the new season.



'Self Portrait' by Cathryn Dhonau LRPS

In the meantime, we hope that you will take notice of these two images - 'Edge Of Reality' by Jayne Winter FRPS & 'Self Portrait' by Cathryn Dhonau LRPS - the former, one of four highly commended images; the

latter, one of three commended images - in our competition on the theme of 'Creative' held in late January of this year.

*Malcolm A Hay
Secretary*

New Catering Business!

Key Event Catering is a new local catering service covering Worcestershire, The Cotswolds and surrounding areas. It was formed by Kiele, who previously co-owned a successful local event catering business and a café. She has now decided to step out on her own and focus on what she loves most: good food and great service. Kiele feels that this doesn't have to be complicated; it just needs care, quality ingredients, and a genuine love for what you do. Planning events is where Kiele feels at home. She loves sitting down with people, hearing about their vision, and then helping turn it into reality, whether that's a milestone birthday, a wedding or a small gathering of family or friends, or any other key event in their life.

Kiele and her wonderful team's catering style is food that brings people together, from finger buffets, delicious cakes, to beautifully curated charcuterie boards.

Key Event Catering has already successfully catered for numerous events, from working lunches, to small gatherings, to garden parties hosting 200+ guests and large sporting events. For the festive time of year, Key Event Catering prepare Christmas inspired Canapés and hampers filled with carefully selected items.

This new chapter is about doing what Kiele loves with the people she loves, and meeting new people along the way, helping them create celebrations that are as stress-free and as special as they should be.



*Please follow
Key Event Catering
on their journey at
www.keyeventcatering.co.uk*

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Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council

The parish council has been working with Highways at the County Council for a general tidy-up and to improve signage at Severn Bank in Severn Stoke village. At the Annual Parish Meeting last spring, residents asked for the speed limit on the sharp bend at Severn Bank to be reduced to 30mph. The general rule (not set by the parish council) is that speed restrictions will only be reconsidered in areas with notable traffic accidents. There have been very few reports submitted to the police about accidents in this area. In the past, our MP has supported in principle the need for a full review of speed limits along the A38, so that could be our next option. May we remind residents to please report all accidents (either witnessed at

the time or observed after the event), so that the statistics exist to support our efforts to make positive changes. Highways have arranged for some of the headwalls to be repaired at Croome Corner/London Arch at the beginning of December 2025. We have also been chasing work on the drains along the road from High Green to Croome. Vehicle Activated Speed Signs (VAS). Thank you to residents who let us know when the VAS batteries run out. We do try to change them regularly. If there are any volunteers who would like to help us care for our electronic speed signs, please, we would be very grateful. The job involves occasional charging of the VAS battery (approx. £5 a charge – claimable from

expenses), donning a high vis, popping along with a ladder, unlocking the VAS, swapping the battery round and giving the screen a wipe with a wet wipe. Glamorous! Our helpers always work in pairs and generally have a bit of a laugh, and it really does make a difference to our community. The speed signs have been proven to slow down visitors and also renew the guilt factor for the locals. Our residents in High Green have been helping with the VAS for nearly a decade now, and without any of our volunteers, we would not be able to use this valuable equipment for the good of the parish. Thank you, as always, to the National Trust, the Police Crime Commissioner, Highways, our County Councillor and our residents,

all for contributing and match-funding to provide these signs over the years.

Next meeting of Severn Stoke and Croome d'Abitot Parish Council:

*26th November 2025, 7:30pm
Croome National Trust Visitor Centre, SOQ room.*

*Parish Council Clerk,
Lisa Stevens,
Tel: 07950256363,
parishclerk@severnstokeand
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*Your councillors are:
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The Masons Arms Ladies Memory Walk



So many of us have been affected by the cruelty of Alzheimer's, watching the person you know well fading into someone so unfamiliar. Struggles with progressive memory loss, communicating effectively, confusion, and changes in mood and behaviour are among the main symptoms. Alzheimer's Society UK supports people affected by dementia in some of the hardest and most frightening times. They do this by being a source of support through practical events, emotional support, and navigating to others who can help, but they cannot do any of it without support. That's when Lydia at The Masons Arms decided to gather sixteen wonderful women from Wadborough and the surrounding area to raise funds through a Memory Walk over the Malvern Hills. The ladies, whose ages ranged from twenty-two to let's just say

seventy-something, were very willing to offer their time and efforts, and joined the plan to don Memory Walk T-shirts and walk together on 8th September. Regulars at the pub helped by raising funds through the monthly quiz night and Killer Darts competitions, with almost £500 coming from fabulous games played at the annual pub anniversary party. The walk itself was a gentle climb with only one short shower and the ladies, whose abilities to navigate the hills were wide-ranging, took time to reflect upon those they'd known and still know, struggling through the savage effects of Alzheimer's. The Masons Ladies raised a staggering total of £2500 - far exceeding the original target of £1000 - and are incredibly grateful for all the generosity and love shown to Alzheimer's Society.



Severnside Parishes

Church Services

First Sunday

10:30am All Age Service
St Mary's Kempsey
10:30am Holy Communion
St Denys Severn Stoke

Second Sunday

10:30am Holy Communion
St Mary's Kempsey
10:30am Holy Communion
St James Norton

Third Sunday

10:30am Informal Worship
St Mary's Kempsey
10:30am Holy Communion
St Denys Severn Stoke

Fourth Sunday

10:30am Holy Communion
St Mary's Kempsey
10:30am Morning Worship
St James Norton

Fifth Sunday

Benefice Service
Please see social media and notice
boards for more information

Thursday's

10:00am Holy Communion
followed by coffee morning

Please see social media and notice
boards for more information.

Contact Information

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email: revkat@severnside.church

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Kempsey Times



Martial Arts in Kempsey

Dragon Tree Martial Arts is a weekly club held on Thursday evenings 6:15-7:30pm at Kempsey Primary School Hall. Children, ranging from the ages of 6 to 18 attend to learn how to gain confidence, make friends and stand up for themselves, training with experienced karate members. At the beginning of the lesson, you enter the main room with a traditional bow, greeting the Sensei teaching. Each student wears a white uniform (Gi) and coloured belt, representing your grade which is dependent on your karate ability and usually your total length training. New belts are given out every six months, there is always silly group photos, lots of smiles, excitement and certificates! An essential part of karate is the community and bonds that are built within the lessons. Many students attend different schools however; training together establishes friendships and trust that is secured when taking part in activities together, as all the students say that they've made good friends at karate. Despite age disparities, older and younger students are constantly interacting and helping each

other out. There is a later session that older students attend typically 6:00 – 7:30pm as well as the younger session, where sometimes more physical or technically challenging techniques and activities are practiced accompanied by the teachers, a more equal learning experience is established as learner and teacher both engage in training and testing each other. Always, there are many volunteers in the "iconic" game 'My Friend Pain', excited to get the honour of being given a bat to chase down other players and get them 'out'! If you get hit then there are exercises that everyone rapidly completes in order to re-enter the game, incorporating exercise and spatial awareness into the game. There are many such energetic, involving games that each demonstrate different skills in karate lessons. Sometimes older students will help run these games, to develop their confidence and teaching skills. Meditation and self-awareness are fundamental as well: at the end of the lesson, sometimes all students and Senseis sit in a resting stance



and breathe deeply together, bow, and then give gratitude to the teacher. Every six months, there is an event which is called grading. This involves each student demonstrating everything that they've learnt, going through their practiced kata, and working through the syllabus for that belt. Senseis always call out the name of the move in traditional Japanese, so students can learn the original

form of karate. Each student will put together a folder that contains key aspects of what they have learnt in class, capturing the child's growth since the very beginning of their karate journey – a bit like a journal. Students are also provided with a mini licence; at larger training seminars, more experienced karate members will sign your licence and even greet you! What a lovely way to spend a Thursday evening.

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