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*Chris Smith - We Remember!*

ISSUE 220 | MARCH 2024



Community magazine for Sedgley, Cornal, Coseley & Tipton

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# Village Voice

Community magazine for  
Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton

## Cover story

March is quite a busy month. First up we have Mothering Sunday which this year falls on 10th-March. This is the perfect time to make your mum feel really special. On 20<sup>th</sup> March Spring time officially begins with the clocks going forward on 31<sup>st</sup> March at 1.00am – we can all look forward to some long overdue lighter nights. Easter Sunday falls on 31<sup>st</sup> March and although it is Christianity's most important holiday its exact origins are unknown and almost certainly it dates back to at least Anglo-Saxon times. Read more about this on page 14.



## Gail



### IN THIS ISSUE

11,22,28,41 It's A Fact!

6 Brainteasers

11&38

We have two extra competitions this month – Capelli Hairdressing are celebrating 30 years in business and are giving away a **Cut and Blow Dry**. The second competition features Graham Fisher's new book – **Stourbridge Glass Museum: how it came into being**. Three lucky winners will get the chance to win a signed copy.

14 With Easter coming up we feature a short article about the various traditions associated with the day – from the Easter Bunny through to Morris Dancing.

16 Our wordsearch competition this month sees 2 x family passes up for grabs to the Odeon Cinema in Merry Hill.

34 We feature an article on Wordsley Brewery and its Gornal roots.

56 Brainteasers Answers

60&61 The Parish Pump – read about what's going on in your area. There is also exciting news about the first ever Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group Fayre.



Please note that the closing date for our competition this month is **MONDAY, 25<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2024**. Entries received after this date will not be entered into the draw. Please ensure your name, address, telephone number and email address are included on your entry.

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Each month over **2,200** copies of this edition of **Village Voice** are delivered throughout **Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley** and **Tipton**.

Extras are given to libraries and selected shops in each area. Be sure to look out for your copy.

### DO YOU RUN A NON PROFIT MAKING CLUB OR SOCIETY? ARE YOU ON THE LOCAL COMMITTEE OF A CHARITY?

Would you like some **FREE** publicity for forthcoming events or to recruit new members? Give us a call, send us an email or drop us a line here at **VILLAGE VOICE** – we would love to help. See our contact details on page 3.

### COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for the **APRIL 2024** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **Monday, 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024**. Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.

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# BRAINTEASERS

**We're keeping it simple this month with a selection of questions that range from easy to ridiculously easy. You may not need the answers but just in case they are on page 56.**

1. "I can travel from there to here by first disappearing and here to there by reappearing". What am I?
2. Which three letters can you insert into each of the following to create a new word (the same three letters for each word):  
 B - - - ON      C - - - TER  
 G - - - TY      ME - - - ED
3. All the vowels have been taken out of the famous saying below. Can you replace them?  
 T R R S H M N T H F R G V D V N
4. There are three houses in a row. One is made of bricks, one of wood and the third from iron. Fires break out in each and people can be heard screaming in them. The emergency services are soon on the scene. Which house did the ambulance try to put the fire out in first?
5. What is the missing word in this sequence?  
 Begin inch chapel elastic ?  
 cellar arisen end

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## WIN A CUT AND BLOW DRY

Just answer this simple question:

***For how many years has Capelli Hairdressing been in business?***

Please email your answer to **villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk**

Winners will be chosen at random from all correct entries received by the closing date of Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024. Please give your name, address and contact number. We will inform you by telephone. To enter you must be aged 18 years or older. No cash or alternative prize will be given.

## it's a fact!

- ★ Much of Sedgley did not have a proper clean—and reliable—water mains supply until 1922, almost 40 years after large parts of Dudley and Wolverhampton had the same facility. The South Staffs Water Co was given permission to supply water to the area by Act of Parliament in 1853 but it was not until 1919 when water from Baggeridge pit was used to supplement supplies pumped in from Lichfield that the company actually completed its obligations.
- ★ In the 1920s many of the handmade bricks manufactured in the brickyards of the area were moulded by women. For every 1050 bricks made the moulder was paid 1/7d and their assistant would get 1/1d.
- ★ In the late 18th century the cost of food increased substantially following several bad harvests. As a result inhabitants of many of the industrial areas of the Black Country were forced into poverty. One of the industrial areas that did not suffer in this way, however, was Lower Gornal where—although many of the people worked in the nail industry or as colliers—most households still had a vegetable patch where they could grow their own food to supplement what they bought in the shops.
- ★ What seems like a very good bargain was advertised in the Liverpool Mercury in May 1884: “*Happy home with tender care offered to two little children over three years of age. Terms including board, laundry and education £5 quarterly—Miss Page, Ladies School, Tipton, Staffordshire*”.



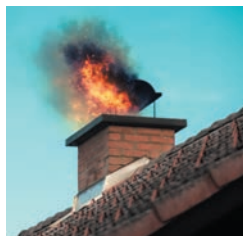
# GREAT BALLS OF FIRE!

On Monday, 23rd April 1797 there was a violent thunderstorm that raged for several hours across the Black Country. There were many floods and trees were blown down. The biggest surprise, however, occurred in Sedgley.

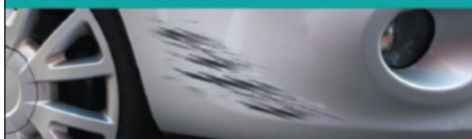
During the storm a ball of fire was seen to hurtle out of the sky...and down the chimney of the house belonging to Stephen Cox, a nailer of Sedgley. Cox, his wife and child were sitting by the fireside but were miraculously left unharmed as the fireball came out of the fireplace and passed through the house and two others adjoining. The fearsome heat melted a lock on one of the doors as well as causing the lead on some of the windows to turn to liquid.

News of the Cox's narrow escape soon spread and over the next few days hundreds of people journeyed to see the damaged houses and to touch the members of the Cox family in the hope that some of their good fortune would be passed on.

Indeed, about three weeks after this event there was another bad storm—the Cox family suddenly found that all their neighbours had come round to their house in order to take refuge. After all they seemed to think, if they had survived one potential disaster then perhaps that was the safest place to be!



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## IT'S EASTERTIME—AND TIME TO SHAKE A STICK OR TWO

**Easter is, of course, an important Christian celebration but its roots go back well beyond the birth of Christ. In fact the word itself is derived from Eostre, an Anglo-Saxon goddess of the dawn and spring.**

It is for this reason that many of the traditional symbols of Easter are connected with birth, fertility and good luck.

Long before chocolate Easter eggs were invented the chicken or duck egg was used as a gift by children to their parents. The children would paint the eggs and give them on the morning of Easter Day.

The Easter Bunny—another symbol of fertility—is associated with the festival largely due to it's ability to reproduce very rapidly. Indeed, in Australia where it is something of a pest because of its high birth rate, some communities have banned the Easter Bunny in shops, replacing it with the Easter Bilby (right), which is an endangered small marsupial.



Another endangered race is the traditional Morris Men who entertain in villages both large and small especially around Eastertime. Many of their songs and dances are connected with the annual contest between Winter and Summer and have been around for hundreds of years. Even Shakespeare refers to the “old art” of Morris dancing. There are different forms of Morris dancing—locally it tends to be ‘Cotswold Morris’ or ‘Border Morris’ with six dancers whilst in other parts of the country (the

North West and South Yorkshire, for example) they dance with eight or ten.

Also in the North West there is a tradition of all-women Morris Dancing

troupes with the participants wearing clogs rather than boots. All forms of Morris dancing make full use of sticks, swords and other implements and it is thought that the term “to shake a stick” at something has its origins in Morris.



Although England is the traditional home of Morris dancing there are now 150 teams in the US, many more than in the UK. There is also one in Hong Kong and at least two in India! In Finland, Easter traditions include little children dressing up as witches on broomsticks and going from house to house collecting sweets (and it is often said that this was the true source of “trick or treat” at Halloween) whilst in the Czech Republic Ash Wednesday is called Ugly Wednesday!



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This month our friends at the Odeon Cinema in Merry Hill have very kindly given us **TWO** family tickets to give away. There are some great films coming through at the moment so why not see if you can win some **FREE** tickets. So don't delay get your entry in as soon as you can. Details below.

All you have to do is search out the square below for the 16 words associated with **ODEON CINEMAS** on our list. Fifteen of them are hidden in the square (spelt forwards, backwards, up or down or diagonally) **whilst one is not there at all – or it may be misspelt!** Once you have identified which one is missing just fill in the form below and send it to us. Alternatively send us an email at [villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk) (remember to include your name, address, postcode, telephone number and email address).

The winners will be the first two correct entries drawn at random after the closing date of **Monday, 25<sup>th</sup> March 2024**. Good luck!

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

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3. DOLBY
4. COFFEE
5. FAMILY
6. MERRY
7. PREMIERE
8. POPCORN
9. ISENSE
10. HILL
11. CLUB
12. LIMITLESS
13. GIFT
14. CANDY
15. COSTA
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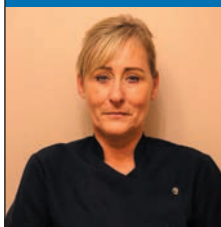


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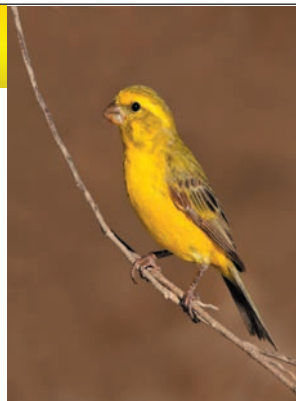
## FROM SOCCER TO PIGEONS (VIA CANARIES)

Born in Wolverhampton in June 1908 Richard “Dick” Rhodes joined Wolverhampton Wanderers FC in July 1926 and over the next nine years made 159 League and Cup appearances for the club before transferring to Sheffield United. During this time he was a member of “Buckley’s Babes”, named after the legendary Wolves manager Major Frank Buckley.

He retired from professional football in 1939 after a short spell with Swansea Town and became a publican back in Wolverhampton running the Old Still.

Having time on his hands he took up a new hobby—canary breeding—and soon he became a leading breeder with a stream of titles to his name. Indeed, he won the “Best Cinnamon Variagated Trophy” for both Scotland and Wales for three consecutive years. In 1973 he won the National title beating no fewer than 1500 competitors at the show which was held at London’s Alexandra Palace. By then he had moved to Wednesfield where he had a large aviary in which he kept around 80 canaries, many of which were prize-winning specimens.

His interest in birds, however, was not confined to canaries as he was also a very keen member of the Lower Gornal Homing Society which for many years used the Pear Tree Inn as its headquarters.



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# it's a fact!

- ★ For many years Sedgley had its own magistrates court where frequently a Stipendiary (full time professional magistrate) sat. It was not always a very busy court. In 1921 a report in the 'County Herald' newspaper stated: *"There were again no cases for hearing at the Sedgley Police Court on Monday. This has occurred at the Stipendiary's Court several times lately, His Worship being engaged (when engaged at all) in hearing summons for non-attendance of children at school. If it were not for these there would be no need for him at all"*.
- ★ The first vicar of All Saints' Church, Sedgley, following the Reformation was Richard Brown who took up his position in 1572. Little is known of his ministry—although the sad facts surrounding his death in 1625 are recorded. As the Parish Register for 30th November of that year tells: *"Mr Richard Brown, Vicar of Sedgley and preacher of the Word of God, did the same day come to the Church, read part of the divine service, went into the pulpit and preached, taking his text out of the 7c of Revelation of Saynte John, came down from the pulpit, went to marry the aforesaid persons, and as he was about to read, fell into a soonde and was carried as dead into the Vicaridge, and within a quarter of an houre or thereabouts revived and presently after came into the Church agayne, churched Johan Marshe, married the partners aforesaid and went to the Vicarige gate, backe agayne, and then was carried into the Vicaridge, and within halfe an houre and lesse died"*.
- ★ In 1953 the BBC recorded a half hour section for their radio programme Community Hymn Singing at St James' Church in Lower Gornal. Not surprisingly, for once, the church was full to overflowing.


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Many DUDLEY workers were persuaded to transfer out of their work pension scheme to a private scheme which paid considerably less! This was bad advice and many retired workers or their widows have lost out!

## Example 1 - £82,000

Mr T. from **BRIERLEY HILL** worked for **ROUND OAK STEEL WORKS**. In 1988, he was advised by a salesman from **PRUDENTIAL** to transfer his **BRITISH STEEL** pension to them. When he retired, he noticed he was getting less than his friends who stayed in the **BRITISH STEEL PENSION SCHEME**. Compensation £82,721.

## Example 2 - £91,000

Mr S. from **QUARRY BANK** worked at **ROUND OAK STEELWORKS**. In 1994, he was advised by a salesman to transfer his pension to **PEARL ASSURANCE** (now called **PHOENIX LIFE**). When he retired, he noticed he was getting less pension than his friends who kept their **BRITISH STEEL PENSION**. Compensation £91,000.

## Example 3 - £103,000

Mr M. from **DUDLEY** worked for **DUDLEY COUNCIL**. In 1989, after he was finished, he was advised by an agent from **SUN LIFE** (now **AVIVA**) to transfer his pension to them. When he retired, he realised he was getting a much lower pension than his friends who kept their **LOCAL GOVERNMENT PENSION**. Compensation £103,341.

## Example 4 - £48,000

Mr G. from **DIXONS GREEN** worked at **DMV FABRICATIONS**. In 1994, after he was finished, he was persuaded by an independent financial advisor to transfer his pension to **STANDARD LIFE**. When he retired, he noticed he was getting less than his friends who kept their works pension. Compensation £48,000.

[www.workpensioncompensation.co.uk](http://www.workpensioncompensation.co.uk)

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## TOMMY BOOTH—FULL CIRCLE

Tommy Booth, the former collier who ran the *Red Lion* in Abbey Road, Gornal Wood for many years owed much to the famous Batham brewing family.

After leaving work in the pits in 1915 he was given the opportunity to become the tenant at the *King William* pub in Netherton, one of the very first public houses acquired by the Batham family.

At the time Daniel Batham did much to encourage Tommy—including giving him a gold sovereign from the first week's takings. Tommy never spent it, however, but had it mounted on a gold watch chain which he wore any time that he was serving behind the bar.

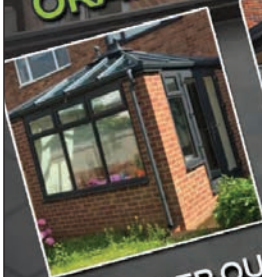
Although he enjoyed working for Bathams, Tommy was very ambitious and keen to branch out on his own and when the *Red Lion* became available he took the opportunity to purchase it. He expanded the brewery attached to the pub and over the next few years acquired a further four pubs across the area including the *Plough & Harrow* in Kinner. In 1953, shortly before his death the following year, Tommy Booth sold the *Plough & Harrow*...to Bathams! Thus the circle was completed.





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# it's a fact!

- ★ Back in 1917 the Dudley Chronicle obviously had many more “Letters To The Editor” than it could print and so it frequently would just print answers rather than the letters themselves. Here is a sample of some of the answers given. We can only speculate about the letters themselves!  
*Joan L—“Regret cannot avail of your offer at present”*  
*Y Knot—“Person you mention has no more to do with it than a pig has to do with a side pocket”*  
*New beaks—“How impolite. The Council can recommend but the selection and appointment rests with the Lord Chancellor. As for whether ———— would make a good magistrate as “he’s always easily got at” we can’t say”.*
- ★ In 1877 at a meeting at the Five Ways Inn, Lower Gornal the “Sedgley & District Rifle Association” was formed. The members heard that a shooting range was to be built on land donated by local company Gibbons. The meeting agreed that all 21 members who had signed up should pay a 10/6d entrance fee plus a 7/6d annual subscription.
- ★ In April 1753 James Williams from Sedgley was executed at Warwick Prison. He—along with his brother Thomas and a man called Thomas Davis—had been found guilty of robbing a Mr Matthews of five guineas, a nine shilling piece and a watch. Williams admitted the robbery saying that his other brother Joseph had been unjustly executed at Stafford for the same crime.
- ★ In the 1880s there was a publication—somewhat akin to today’s Private Eye—called The Magpie which circulated in and around Dudley and Sedgley.

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# GORNAL PUB ROOTS

**In the third quarter of the 20th century several of the pubs in Lower Gornal—most notably the White Chimneys, Queen’s Head and Junction—were owned by the Wordsley Brewery, one of the best known local breweries in the area.**

Based in the building that later became the Olympia Cinema in Brierley Hill Road, Wordsley the brewery began in 1858. Edward Oakes was the prime mover and under his control the brewery initially prospered. Indeed by 1885 it was producing no less than 4500 gallons a week—and had a very profitable side-line in mineral waters.

Just five years later, however, Oakes was bankrupt and the brewery and its assets were acquired by new owners. Despite a significant marketing campaign and the introduction of a new range of beers (including Imperial Stout “especially for invalids” and a Light Dinner Ale at just 8d) the brewery never made a significant profit. In 1906 the Wordsley Brewery Co together with its 29 tied pubs—including the three in Gornal—were again up for sale. This time they were acquired by the Hereford & Tredegar Brewery Co but just three years later the brewery and its various pubs were again sold. This time the three Gornal establishments were acquired by Ansells.

Both the Queen’s Head and The Junction were closed down but the White Chimneys lasted for a further 70 years until in 1984 it was closed and then later demolished. The decision to close this still popular local was somewhat surprising as it had undergone major refurbishment just two years earlier



*This extremely grainy old photograph shows The White Chimneys in Gornal during the late 1920s. The man posing outside the door was Jack Jones who was once the tenant of the pub.*

and plans had been passed for it to be extended. In addition, the outside had been completely re-rendered and the pub was looking smarter than it had for many a year. Its demise was put down to a need for Ansells to cut back on its estate after a disastrous 9-month long draymen’s strike that had almost brought the company to its knees.

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## HUGE SUCCESS FOR CLASSATHON FUNDRAISER IN MEMORY OF BLAZE ANGEL KERRY



Last December, just before Christmas, we were all devastated to hear of the death of Blaze Angel, Kerry Boucker. Kerry had worked most of her life as a senior colourist for Snippers and then Blaze Hair. Brett Harris and the Blaze Angels formulated plans for a fundraising event—a Back to Back Classathon at JD Gym in Brierley Hill which took place on Sunday, 18th February. It was a huge success and praise must go to everyone who took part in the event.

The plan was to raise £5000 for Midlands Air Ambulance Charity—an organisation that was instrumental in caring for Kerry and who are extremely close to both Blaze and the Boucker family.

So the plan for Sunday was a back to back Classathon which was open to both members and non-members (with small donations being given by everyone who took part). It ran from 8.15am through until approximately 2.00pm with HIIT Step, Bootcamp, Combat, Strength, Circuits, Spin and ending with Yoga. Huge praise must go to the powerhouse of the day better known as Laura Smith who tirelessly organised, taught and worked throughout the whole programme of events—true dedication. And then, of course, there was the Posh Tombola! As well as the many donations left in the salon, hundreds of prizes had been donated to the team including bottles of wines and spirits, pamper packs, chocolates and hampers and much more.

The stall was in the capable hands of organiser, Rose Cook Monk, together with a band of volunteers who all wanted to do their best on the day to make it a day to remember. And so it was. There have been radio interviews with Clive



*l/r Candice Starkey, Kay Starkey and Mike Andrews of Air Ambulance; Pauline Gray, Rose Cook-Monk, Juliet Simpson and Jan Hopcutt.*

Payne of Black Country Radio, press coverage and BBC Midlands Today covered the fundraising event on Sunday.

In total the team have smashed the original total of £5,000 and at the time of publication have raised a staggering £7800!!! Donations are still rolling in and the cut off point will be 28th April—a very apt day—Kerry's birthday. Going forward Blaze will continue to work with the charity by organising an annual fundraising event in aid of Kerry. Look out for a further update in the April edition of Village Voice Magazine.

**Photos courtesy of  
Celina Taylor Photography**

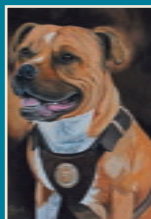


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## A MOST TROUBLESOME VICAR

Joseph Eccleshall, the vicar of Sedgley between 1657 and 1662 was responsible for the establishment of the first church in Coseley—albeit a non-conformist chapel.

After the Savoy Conference of 1661 had decreed that the Book of Common Prayer should be used in all churches in the country, over 2000 clergy—including the good Rev. Eccleshall—refused to obey and as a consequence lost their livings. Although Eccleshall was supposed to move out of Sedgley and not preach within 50 miles of his previous church, in fact he only went as far as Coseley where he became the driving force behind the establishment of the Old Meeting House non-conformist chapel. For almost 30 years he worked tirelessly in the Coseley community and when he died in 1692 it was felt appropriate that he should be buried in the area that he had come to love and which undoubtedly loved him. Indeed, so many people crowded into the Old Meeting House chapel for his funeral that a disaster very nearly occurred. With a tremendous ‘crack’ the floor of the chapel gave way and some of the congregation were pitched into the cellar. Luckily no-one was badly injured and hurried arrangements were made to conclude the service in an adjoining orchard. The problem remained, however, as to who was going to pay for the repairs to the church building. An appeal was launched as a memorial to Eccleshall and the money needed to repair the chapel floor was quickly raised from the local Coseley population. Indeed, much more than was needed for the floor was collected and the surplus was put to providing education for some of the youngsters in the village. For several years afterwards a special anniversary service at the Old Meeting House was held in memory of Joseph Eccleshall and frequently this had to be held in the adjoining orchard, not because of damage to the church but because of the sheer volume of attendees.



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The wait is finally over for the newly published book by author Graham Fisher MBE FRGS entitled "Stourbridge Glass Museum; how it came into being".

Graham's new work covers the intense period of just 13 years—a remarkably quick timescale—from the formation of the British Glass Museum through to the official opening in 2023 of a brand new purpose-built canal-side facility that will conserve and promote both the heritage and the future of local glassmaking for generations to come. Graham Knowles, Chairman of the British Glass Foundation commented: "*Graham has captured the essence of creating what we consider is a 'People's Museum' from the relics of a former glassmaking site that, more than 20 years after its closure, is still regarded locally with great affection. His latest book is a fascinating narrative in its own right but his recording of how we arrived here will doubtless prove of immense value to researchers and historians yet to be born.*"

The book is available to purchase through the Museum and from all the usual outlets including Amazon, local retailers in and around the Black Country and Hay-on-Wye or via the author's website at [www.grahamfisher.co.uk](http://www.grahamfisher.co.uk). The book is priced at £10.00 with all proceeds going to the British Glass Foundation/Stourbridge Glass Museum.

We have three signed copies of the book to give away to three lucky winners. All you have to do is answer a simple question: "*How many years does Graham's new book cover*". Send your answer either by post to **Village Voice Magazine, "Book Competition", Forge House, 50 Redhall Road, Gornal Wood, Dudley DY3 2NL** or email your answer to [villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk)





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## TOP GOLFER WITH SEDGLEY ROOTS

One of the country's leading golfers in the 1920s and 30s was Archibald Compston, a Sedgley lad who was a member of the first three British Ryder Cup teams. Archie's father, John, was a Limeburner who lived in Bath Street, Sedgley with his wife Maryanne and four children.

In the 1901 census the eldest son—also called John—was described as being a “*golf green keeper*” and it would seem that it was through him that Archie, the youngest member of the family, was introduced to the sport. Certainly Archie became a regular at Penn Golf Club before finding employment at Kidderminster Golf Club (where he was sacked for “idleness” in 1909). Despite this setback he went on to become a leading professional and was chosen to represent his country in the first three Ryder Cup challenges against the United States. He later became the resident professional at Coombe Hill Golf Club in Kingston Upon Thames where he taught King Edward VIII to play the game. Archie was best known in golfing circles for his amazing 18 and 17 victory over the great Walter Hagan in a 72 hole challenge match in 1928. The stakes were £500, a very significant amount in those days and it was said that there were also a number of side-bets running which amounted to several hundred pounds more. Amongst his other little quirks Archie Compston also had the unusual habit of employing three caddies when he played. One caddy would carry his clubs, another would take charge of his jacket and jumper and the third would hold his cigarettes and pipe!



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**it's a fact!**

★ On 4th November 1835 it was announced that Queen Adelaide, the wife of King William IV, had become one of the subscribers to an edition of the New Testament published by Rev Girdlestone, the vicar of Sedgley. The edition—complete with Notes and Commentary—was published to raise funds to pay off the debt of the church rate.

★ One of the rhymes that youngsters in the area used to chant was:

*“Rawhead and Bloody Bones  
Steals naughty children from their homes  
Takes them to his dirty den,  
And they are never seen again”*

Rawhead was characterised as an evil old man who lived at the bottom of pit shafts and feasted on human flesh—the fresher the better! Bloody Bones was his accomplice who chewed bones!

★ One of the most amazing stories regularly quoted in Sedgley is the tale of ‘Petticoat Phoebe’. It is said that she carried two mugs of beer to the pithead where her husband and son were working. She accidentally fell down the shaft, however, and it was feared that she would be killed. Fortunately, though, her petticoat billowed out around her and acted as a parachute allowing her to descend slowly down without injury. Indeed, such was the cushioning effect of the petticoat that not only did she suffer just minor bruises but also she didn’t spill the beer that she still held in her hands!

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## MOTHERING SUNDAY: LET'S LOOK AT WHERE IT ALL STARTED

**Mothering Sunday has its roots as far back as the 16th century when, on the fourth Sunday of Lent, all church members were expected to go their 'mother' church (usually the parish church cathedral or abbey) to worship rather than attend the service in a 'daughter' church.**

These occasions were great family affairs and it became the tradition that domestic servants were given the day off in order to return to their families for the day.

Quite often the sons and daughters returning to their families would bring with them a small present for their mother—hence the modern tradition of buying a small gift. In days gone by the present would often be wild flowers picked from the hedgerows or a small simnel cake. This is a small rich fruit cake (not dissimilar to a Christmas cake) which is usually decorated with 11 balls of marzipan to denote the 11 'true' disciples of Christ—Judas was excluded for obvious reasons.



There are various suggestions about the origins of the name 'simnel' although generally it is accepted that it derives from the Latin 'similia' meaning a light wheaten flour which was used in its baking. The cakes would be produced by servant girls in the kitchens of their employers and then taken home to their mothers as a present. It has been said that the cakes were named after Lambert Simnel who impersonated Richard, Duke of York, the son of King Edward IV and who tried to seize the throne. However, there are numerous references to simnel cakes in literature that long pre-date the ambitious Mr Simnel and any connection can be dismissed.

A local tale is equally inaccurate. It tells of two sisters, Sim and Nell who were making a cake together and could not decide whether it should be steamed or baked. They even came to blows with brooms as they argued and eventually, it is said, they decided to steam the cake for a while and then bake it as a convenient compromise. There is no evidence, however, that these warring sisters ever existed.

Mothers' Day is celebrated across the world—although on very different dates. In Albania and Bulgaria, for example it is always celebrated on 8th March whilst in Indonesia it is held on 22nd December. In the US—like Australia, Canada, Italy, Turkey and Japan—it is always commemorated on the second Sunday in May.



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## OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

### Let's Give a toast in Tea to George Edward Wyers, Esquire!

My grandfather Harry was a skilled carpenter. I was not. A 'coffee table' I made in school woodwork, should it have made its way to a London saleroom rather than our coal shed, would have been catalogued, I think, as an interesting example of ethnic art.



When George Edward Wyers became joint proprietor with Margaret, his wife, of Wall Heath's Decormar store in the late 1960s, his ability as an experienced carpenter ensured constructive advice to customers embarking on tricky D.I.Y. projects—of course with anyone like me he'd have said, 'leave it to someone else!'.

The Decormar shop began as a single storey building on a piece of long-neglected land next to a row of old cottages. A Wall Heath veteran recalled an even more ancient dwelling on the site, the front door a step or so down, below the level of the pavement.

For well over twenty years at Decormar, George and Margaret built up a pleasing friendship with all kinds of patrons. Due to an unfortunate concatenation of

circumstances—we had the electricity cut off—my mum and I must have been valued customers for lamp oil, and candles. It was a pleasant experience, drinking a cuppa in the warm glow of the George Wyers Illuminations.

George, a Brierley Hill man born in 1934—the same year as Ontario's Dionne Quintuplets—was always ready for a chuckle. I was there when a lady told him "I'm expecting again." With a straight face, George enquired, "Have they found out what's causing it, yet?". Humorous and helpful—and Mr Wyers loved a nice cup of tea; the cup that cheers you up, and so did George.



*An old box of George's candles*

**John Sparry at his bookshop, archive and (cob) website, Cot House,  
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# A GARDENER'S WORK IS NEVER DONE!

**With phenomenal rain and saturated gardens in late February, you may be feeling a little disheartened to begin working towards the beautiful colours we expect in the summer months, but the time has arrived to start sowing seeds, take cuttings and generally work through the plans that have been made for 2024—whether you choose to have a garden full of organic vegetables, borders full of summer flowers or a mixture of both, now is definitely the time to get gardening and grow!**

Daffodils will by now be coming to the end of their lifespan so tie them back and leave them die back, mulch the ground around shrubs and divide perennials. Now is also the time to give a spring trim to roses, hedging plants and Dogwood to ensure new growth. Be sure though to look for areas of the garden that need a change—lift old woody bushes and consider adding a few new small shrubs that can grow and add contrast over the coming couple of years.

Now is also the time to sow hardy annuals and perennials under glass, ideally in a heated greenhouse or on a windowsill and take cuttings of stock plants that have been over wintered like Fuchsias and Geraniums—Begonia and Dahlia tubers should be planted too but try not to over water them. Hanging baskets and patio container trailing plants like Nepeta, Helichrysum and Verbenas always add value, colour and contrast to any display.



If you find space a little challenging then why not consider ordering plug plants online. Otherwise pop down to Prestwood Cave Nursery where they will have a selection of basket starter plants. These are often an economical way of increasing the amount of plants you have without the downside of seeds not germinating, young seedlings dampening off or late frosts affecting growth rates. Furthermore, buying in fully grown plants during April and May can work out expensive per plant with a limited choice of colours and varieties available due to everyone wanting plants at the same time.

Many nurseries are now taking orders for hanging baskets which will be ready to collect from the end of May, once frosts have hopefully left us or why not attend a hanging basket workshop at Prestwood Cave Nursery and make your own basket to impress family and friends. Booking is essential for this to avoid disappointment—times are available through May in the afternoon or early evening.

Finally, don't forget the birds and keep ponds from icing over as frosts can still occur right up to mid May. Watch out for seedlings, plugs and tender plants who are also prone to frosts even if grown in a greenhouse.



## HAPPY GARDENING!

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## INTERESTING FACTS

The “Ides of March” was a day in the Roman calendar equivalent to March 15th. It was considered to be a deadline for settling debts. It was also the day Julius Caesar was assassinated.

If you were born in March, your birth flower is a daffodil.

March babies have two birthstones—aquamarine and bloodstone which symbolises courage.

March is the time of year when animals start waking up from hibernation.

The name for March comes from Mars, the Roman god of war. It was named as such in both the Julian and Gregorian calendars.

The popular social media outlet Twitter was launched on 21 March 2006, with the very first tweet going out on the same day—it was posted by the founder, Jack Dorsey and read “just setting up my twttr”.

Saint Patrick’s Day occurs every March on the 17th and is celebrated in many western countries to commemorate the day Saint Patrick died.

Back in the older days, March was the month when military campaigns would resume that had previously been put on hold for the winter.

The Eiffel Tower was ascended for the first time in March. Eiffel himself led a group of government officials and members of the press to the top. The elevators were not in operation at the time so the journey was made on foot and took over an hour.

Easter Sunday is another popular holiday which was initially observed by Christians to celebrate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It has now become a holiday involving egg hunting, candy and the Easter bunny.

There are two zodiac signs in March – Pisces which is until 20 March and Aries which is from the 21st.

# BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

1. The letter "T"
2. The three letters are R I T (making the words **BRITON**, **CRITTER**, **GRITTY** and **MERITED**).
3. The phrase is **TO ERR IS HUMAN TO FORGIVE DIVINE**.
4. **ICE**. The last two letters of the previous word are the first two of the next.
5. Ambulances don't put out fires!

Here are a few bonus brainteasers—  
answers will be in the April edition.

1. A barrel with no lid is partially filled with beer. Alan thinks that it is more than half full and Brian thinks that it is less than half full. Without using any measuring instruments or by pouring the beer out of the barrel how can you find out who is right?
2. If a hen and a half lay an egg and a half in a day and a half how many eggs would six hens lay at the same rate in six days?
3. What falls but doesn't break and what breaks but doesn't fall?

## COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **FEBRUARY** editions was **TURTLES** – it was misspelt. The lucky winners of the tickets to **SEA LIFE CENTRE** and **LEGOLAND** are:

**VERONICA MILTON** of Wombourne (who wins a family pass to Sea Life Centre) and **Ms M A JEAUVONS** of Stourton (who wins a family pass to LegoLand).

You can find this month's competition on page 16.

**PLEASE NOTE:** Only one entry per person per month is allowed – multiple entries will be disqualified. Winners are chosen at random from all correct entries received by the closing date.

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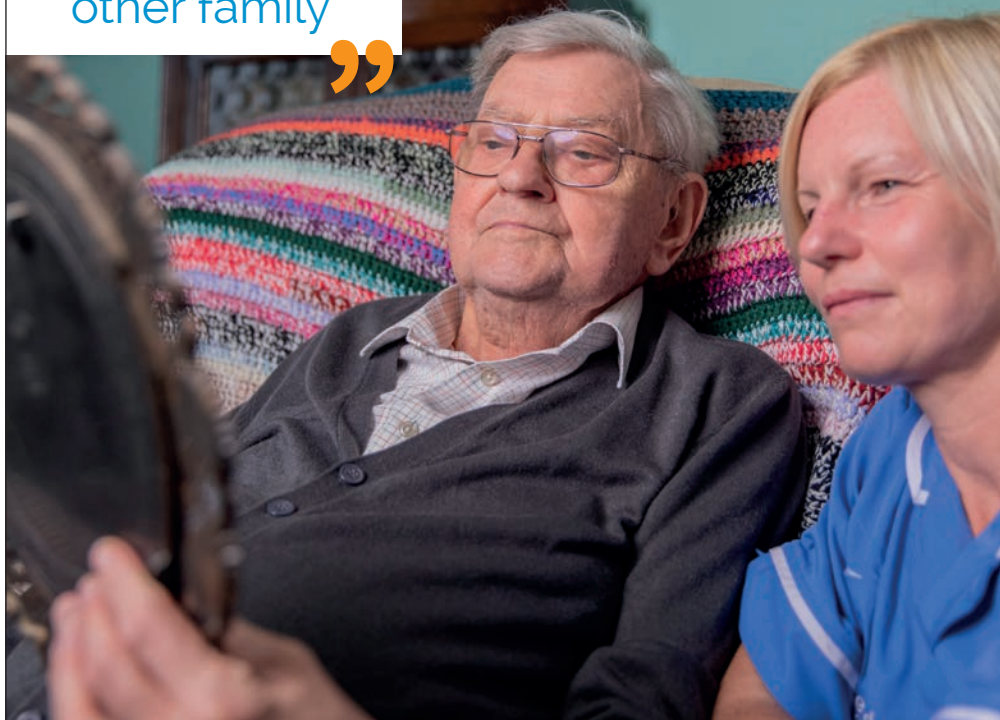
Congratulations to **JENNIFER EDWARDS** of Sedgley who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **FEBRUARY** edition.



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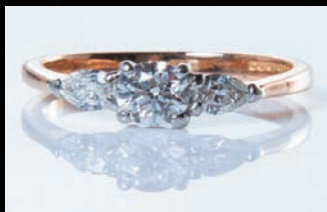
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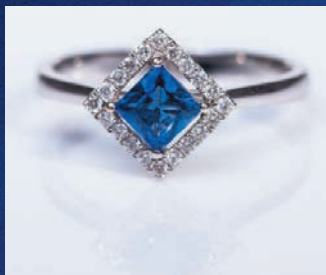
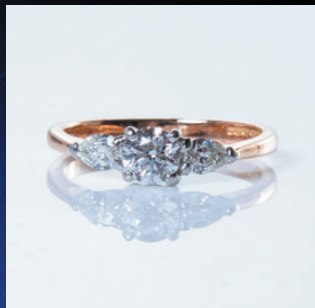
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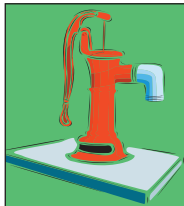
**Thursday** - Closed/workshop day

**Friday** - 9.30-4.30

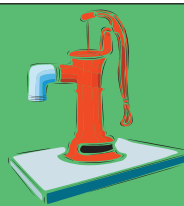
**Saturday** - 9.30-4.30

**Sunday** - Closed



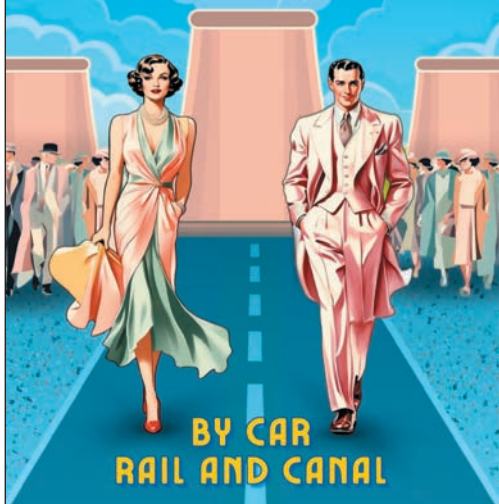


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We have received exciting news from the **Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group** that they will be hosting their first ever **Local History Fayre** on **Sunday, 16th June 2024** from 11.00am-4.00pm. It is being held at **Tipton Sports Academy, Wednesbury Oak Road, Tipton DY4 0BS**.

There will be a licensed bar and food available throughout the day as well as a large free car park.

If you are interested in taking part in the Fayre and would like to book a table, please contact Robert Hazel on [robert26hazel@gmail.com](mailto:robert26hazel@gmail.com)

With effect from 1st March the **SEDGLEY MORNING TOWNSWOMEN'S GUILD** will be meeting on the first **Thursday of the month at 10.00 - 12.15 at the Beacon Centre for the Blind, Wolverhampton Road East WV4 6AZ.**

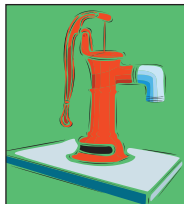
The committee decided to change their venue and at the same time support a local charity. They have held their committee meetings at the Beacon Centre for some time and were offered the use of one of their conference rooms for their regular monthly meetings.

The Group are looking forward to welcoming their regular members and also to be able to extend a warm welcome to ladies looking to make new friends and enjoy regular outings. The programme for the next year is a mixture of speakers on a wide variety of topics and some interesting outings. Anyone interested please pop along to one of the meetings—you will be made most welcome.

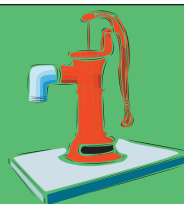
THE NEXT PARISH PUMP WILL  
BE IN THE **APRIL** EDITION AND THE  
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**FRIDAY, 15th MARCH 2024.**

Insertions are free if you run a Group or Association that is non-profit making. Please send your details via email to Gail at [villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk)





# The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



## Colour Your Memories

Free colouring in sessions for Adults 50+. At Gornal Library, free refreshments included. No bookings required just turn up and have fun!



The first Wednesday of every month starting March 6th - 2nd October 2024.  
11am -1pm, drop in every time or any time.



So Come along on your own or with a friend to reminisce, meet new people and colour in! You will be colouring in images of themes and places that make Gornal special.



For more information contact Gornal Library on 01384 812755. we look forward to seeing you.



## DUDLEY PROBUS CLUB

lunch meetings are held on the 2nd Thursday in the month starting at 12.15pm and are held at The Lodge, Wellington Road, Dudley.

**14 March—John Sparry—'21 Reasons to be Cheerful'**

**11 April—Eric Newton—'Life and Times of a Busker'**

**9th May—Rose Cook-Monk—'Duncan Edwards Black Country Hero'**

Further details can be obtained by emailing [dudleyprobus@gmail.com](mailto:dudleyprobus@gmail.com) or by visiting the Dudley Probus website.

## SEDGLEY ACTIVE

### RETIREMENT GROUP

meet every Thursday morning at  
**Sedgley Community Centre,**  
**Ladies Walk, Sedgley DY3 3UA** from  
10.00am-12.00 noon (term time only).

### COMING UP IN MARCH AND APRIL:

7th March—**Black Country Humour** by  
speaker **David Bartley**

14th March—**AGM plus members' short stories**

21st March—**Gordon of Khartoum** by  
speaker **Max Keen**

28th March **Beacon Centre for the Blind**  
by speaker **Pete Moodie**.

11 April—**Snowdonia Slate Trail** by  
speaker **Dave Briscoe**

18th April—**My Life as an Amateur Film Maker** by speaker **Keith Edwards**

25th April—**Black Country Humour** by  
speaker **Marlene Watson**

**NEW MEMBERS ARE ALWAYS  
WELCOME—the first two sessions  
are FREE.**

For further information, please contact  
**Sidney Millinson** on  
**01902 270430**

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