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Chris Smith - We Remember!

ISSUE 240 | NOVEMBER 2025



Community magazine for Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton

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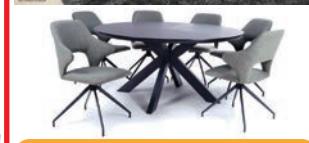
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# Village Voice

**Community magazine for  
Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton**

## Cover story

The 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the 11<sup>th</sup> day of the 11<sup>th</sup> month commemorates the end of the First World War and, as always Remembrance Day is a very special public display of the continuing recognition of the debt we owe all those who protected us and our way of life.

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The poppy is, of course, the iconic symbol of Remembrance Day when the sacrifice made by those Commonwealth troops who died during the First World War is commemorated.

On pages 52&53 we tell the story about how the poppy became such a universal symbol of the War to end all Wars and how it inspired many people to turn to poetry as a reminder to future generations that we must never forget.

## Gail



## IN THIS ISSUE

**6,14,40,46** It's A Fact!

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- 24** Read about the drunken night out that ended in tragedy.
- 34** This month for our Wordsearch prize we have raided the Village Voice coffers to provide 2 x £50.00 shopping vouchers.
- 43** Tipton Tree of Light
- 47** We feature the second of Trevor Langley's reviews on all things drink. This month is all about Gin.
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- 58-61** The Parish Pump: Read about what is going on with groups and associations in and around your area.



**Please note that the closing date for our competition this month is  
FRIDAY, 21<sup>st</sup> NOVEMBER 2025. 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.

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### COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for the **DECEMBER 2025** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **WEDNESDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2025**. Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.

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- ★ There was a near riot in Tipton during the General Election campaign of November 1868. Supporters of candidate Dr Kenealy toured the streets throwing stones at passersby and the police. Indeed one special constable was attacked and had to take shelter in a nearby house. His assailants, however, dragged him out and beat him with pick-axe handles leaving him for dead. Pubs were attacked and eventually thirty policemen were sent out to quell the disturbance and a company of the 4th Rifles were put on standby in Wolverhampton in case they were needed.
- ★ An incident on 27th April 1779 at Sedgley Courthouse caused outrage throughout the village. As the entry in the court records shows: “*Wm Southwick, gentleman, during the Sitting of this court with great force and violence with a wooden club or stick of the value of one penny which he then and there held in his hands did assault and strike Wm Bennett, Deputy Beadle of this Manor, in the mouth and thereby knocked out two of his teeth and so drew blood from the same Wm Bennett.*” Southwick was fined 39s/11d.
- ★ In March 1863 it was reported that 800 children from the Independent and Wesleyan Schools in Gornal walked in procession through the village together with “*an excellent drum and fife band and banners with suitable inscriptions*”. The occasion was the celebration of the marriage of the Prince of Wales to Princess Alexandra of Denmark. After the procession the children were each presented with a medal before returning to their schools where buns and oranges were awaiting them.



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## A PARK FOR THE PEOPLE

Back in May 1893 some 860 ratepayers from Tipton sent a petition to the Tipton Local Board of Health requesting the development of a new park in the township...but nothing happened until 1897 when it was further suggested that some form of commemoration of the forthcoming Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria should be planned. This coincided with an anonymous donation by a local resident of £500 towards the cause—as long as it was a public park and the rest of the money was raised by public subscription.

A site of 35 acres off Park Lane East was then acquired at a cost of £1,500 and plans were drawn up. However, a substantial amount of preliminary work had to be undertaken as coal mining had taken place there and there were mine shafts to be capped and a large spoil heap to be removed. Perhaps the most impressive aspect of the park, however, was the various donations provided by local residents—an ornate drinking fountain costing £100, a children's gymnasium and shelter, several park benches plus a peacock and two swans were all given. Work on the park continued apace until an opening date of 29th July 1901 was set. Unfortunately not all was quite ready on the chosen day as the lake had not been completely filled. This, though, did little to disrupt the celebrations.

The opening commenced with a grand procession from the council offices in Owen Street to the park. At the head was the Earl of Dartmouth accompanied by mounted police, the Princes End Prize and Dudley Port bands, the Tipton Rifle Volunteers, the Boys' Brigade, local councillors and the mayors of the adjoining boroughs. They were met at the park gates by hundreds of on-lookers who watched as the Earl opened the gates with a ceremonial silver key. The crowds flooded in and enjoyed the new park and all its glories.

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it's a fact!

- ★ In 1351 John de Vherleton, John de Hynkeleye, William Moyle, Adam Flemmyng and Edmund de Penne (all of Sedgley) together with Walter, Vicar of the Church of Seggesleye, were charged with illegally seizing land including 1080 acres of woodland from Roger le Aylesbury and Roger Hillary. The defendants failed to appear in court but were found guilty in their absence. They were required to forfeit half their own lands and pay 1000 marks.
- ★ In 1922 John Harper of Hill Street, Upper Gornal was summonsed by Mr H Bashford, the Attendance Officer, for not sending his daughter to school. His wife appeared in court and said that the child had a bad heart which hurt her eyes (!) Dr Ballenden gave evidence that he believed that the child was perfectly fit to go to school but Mrs Harper disagreed and that she would only send her daughter to school once she was convinced that she was fit. The Stipendiary magistrate, N.C.A. Neville, made an order that the child should be sent to Lichfield Industrial School until she was 14. At this the mother threatened the Attendance Officer warning him that "someone will pay". Bashford then said "I'm not afraid of you.". "You should be" retorted the Mother who was then fined 14s for not bringing the child to court.
- ★ In 1919 Coseley Education Committee decided to accept a tender from John Marston Ltd for the supply of a 'Sunbeam' bicycle for use by the school nurse. The cost was £22/12s (with a lamp and bell extra). The Committee also accepted an offer from Wolverhampton Eye Infirmary to purchase tickets entitling patients to one month's treatment at the Infirmary either as an in-patient or out-patient. The cost was one guinea for three tickets.

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## HOW OTHERS SEE US

**It is sometimes interesting to see just how others see us and where we live.**

**Sometimes, however, the views are not always what we might want to hear...**

In 1934 J.B. Priestley wrote his celebrated travelogue "English Journey" which included a short visit to Gornal: "I remember arriving at the very end of the earth where the land appeared to have been uprooted by a great pig and where there were cottages so small and odd that they must have been built for gnomes, and the end of the earth was called Gornal and there the women, returning home from the brickworks wore caps and shawls...and looked as outlandish as the place they lived in."



Sedgley has not fared much better—indeed none other than Queen Victoria (seen left) who wrote in 1893 that she was very distressed about the news of the “deplorable conditions of the homes of the Sedgley poor” following reports of a young girl dying in poverty.

In 1868 Dr Ballenden, the Medical Officer of Health for Dudley, wrote in a report about the area: “Thirty years amongst the nailers of Sedgley convinces me that they are the most immoral people in England...the women have more manly qualities than the men and in free fights the wife is generally the victor”.

Coseley doesn't escape either. “Coseley is an area that defies description. It is dirty and the people are dissolute and barbaric. It is not a place to visit after dark”. This was by Charles Dickens.

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# BRAINTEASERS

This month we have a new set of crazy dingbats for you to try to work out. All you have to do is say what you see—it's as simple as that. The answers are all well known phrases and can be found on page 56 if you need them.

1	ME	ME	ME	6	WAETHER
	AL	AL	AL	7	ONDON
2	1	3	5		ARIS
	2	4	6	8	PLEASANT CCU
3	KNOW	it	NO	9	GRA12"VE
4	ROBBERS			10	ARTHUR
5	QUACK	CLUCK			BORED
	CLUCK	QUACK		11	CCRREEAAMM
				12	DAMN ?

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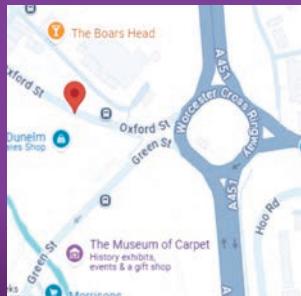
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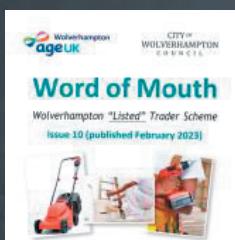
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# DRUNKEN NIGHT OUT ENDS IN TRAGEDY

**What started as an evening out with friends ended with the tragic and brutal death of a pregnant woman at the Jolly Crispin in Upper Gornal...**

On 23rd September 1844, 52 year told Joseph Penn and his partner Prudence Hughes met up with friends at the Hare & Hounds in Dudley before starting to return towards Sedgley where they lived. The friends were in front of Penn and Hughes as they walked down the road but Prudence caught up with them and showed that her mouth was bleeding as Penn had just hit her. The two friends then went their own way and Hughes started to walk towards the Green Dragon pub at the top of Jews Lane in Upper Gornal, leaving Penn (who was wearing a white smock-frock) following her some distance behind.

At about 2.00am the following morning a man called Carter living in Gornal heard a woman scream and when he looked out of his window he saw a man in a white smock-frock hitting a woman. He called out but the couple started walking down the road away from his house. Later that morning two policemen (Isaac Tomkinson and Francis Eager) were on patrol nearby when they came across Penn and Hughes. Prudence Hughes was laying on the road and her boyfriend was standing over her.

The policemen asked Penn what was happening and he said that she was just drunk. PC Tomkinson, however, noticed some blood on the road and Penn quickly changed his story and said that she was having a miscarriage. PC Tomkinson immediately went off to find a doctor whilst PC Eager, with the help of Penn and a passerby carried Prudence Hughes to the nearby Jolly Crispin pub. As soon as the surgeon arrived Penn was escorted to Coseley Police Station for questioning. Here he said that all he had done was try to persuade Hughes to return home to her three children and the only violence he had shown her was to push her. It was clear that Prudence Hughes was in a bad way and at about 9.00am on 24th September she died at the Jolly Crispin. An inquest was held and evidence as to the cause of death was given by Dr Ballenden who had attended her at the pub. He said that she had suffered two haemorrhages following ruptures of two arteries, one of which was undoubtedly caused by a blow.

Penn stood trial at Stafford Quarter Sessions and was found guilty of manslaughter. The Judge—Justice Colman—announced that the sentence was that Joseph Penn should be transported to Australia for a period of ten years. On 28th March 1845 Penn with 219 other convicts was taken aboard the SS Theresa which sailed for Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania) arriving there on 3rd July 1845. It seems, however, that Penn died just a few months later. It is said that, at times, the ghost of Prudence Hughes still haunts the Jolly Crispin and that her voice can be heard calling for forgiveness from her children.



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Prior to the introduction of the Welfare State in 1948 many people used Friendly Societies in order to save for an income in old age or as insurance against illness or an inability to work. So successful were these societies that by the end of the 1800s there were some 27,000 Friendly Societies throughout the country.

Most of the societies were based in pubs—where men would go to deposit their savings—and were given memorable names. For some reason around the Black Country the names of flowers for the societies was very popular. ‘The Fuchsia Friendly Society’ was based at the Red Lion in Gornal Wood whilst the ‘Geranium’ Society had its headquarters at the Red Cow at the Graveyard (otherwise known as Grosvenor Road).

‘The Thistle Friendly Society’ met at the Wagon & Horses in Lower Gornal and at the Cross Inn in Kingswinford. Other popular themes included mining (‘The Miners’ Hope’ at the George & Dragon in Upper Gornal, ‘Miners’ Refuge’ at the White Chimneys in Gornal Wood and the ‘Miners’ Pride’ based at the Limerick Inn in Lower Gornal).

There were some societies whose name might be associated with the good feeling that the association provided. Typical examples included ‘Heart’s Content’ at the Old House At Home in Coseley and ‘The Band of Hope’ at the Old Mill in Ruiton.



DUDLEY WINTER  
ALES FAYRE  
St James's Road,  
Dudley DY1 1HP  
27-29 November  
2025

The Dudley Winter Ales Fayre is returning to Dudley Town Hall in November!

The three day beer festival runs 27-29 November and is organised by members of the Dudley and South Staffordshire branch (including Sedgley, Kingswinford and Wombourne) of the Campaign for Real Ale and neighbouring branches

There will be in excess of 70 real ales and ciders featured this year.

The doors will open at 1.00pm on Thursday and 11.00am on Friday and Saturday. Doors close on Thursday and Friday at 10.00pm.

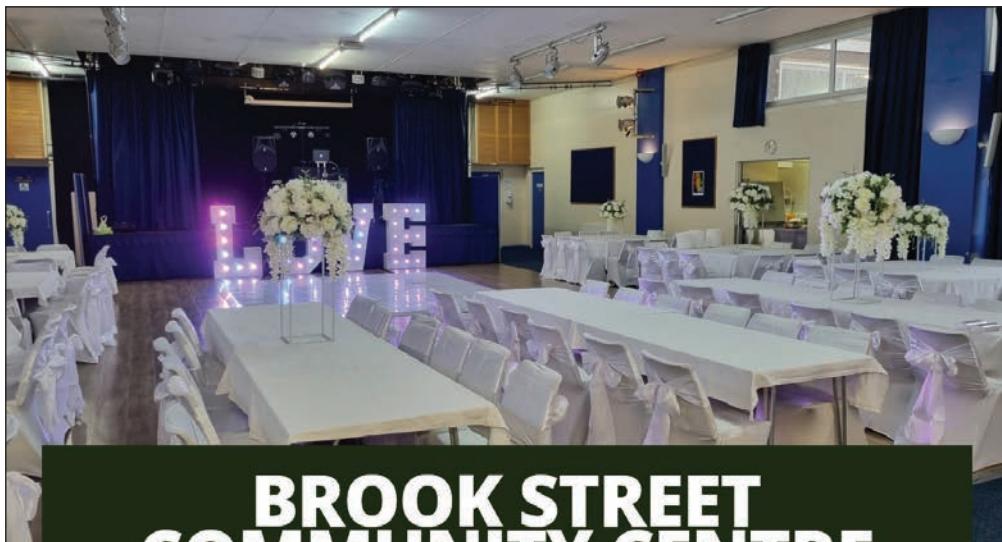
Admission is free for all CAMRA members who book in advance for Thursday and Friday and is free to all without pre-booking on the Saturday.

To buy advance tickets please visit [www.dudley.camra.org.uk](http://www.dudley.camra.org.uk)

The festival this year celebrates the 200th anniversary of Priory Hall in Dudley and the bare knuckle boxer ‘The Tipton Slasher’. In honour of these milestones there will be a special glass featuring them at the festival.

There will be live entertainment on the Friday and Saturday together with hot and cold food available each day.

Another plus point for visitors—anyone joining CAMRA at the event will receive two free pints!



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# DID YOU KNOW?

In 1841 in Sedgley most men (1,905) were employed in mining followed by (1,863) in manufacturing. As far as women were concerned the most popular employment was domestic service (419).

In Coseley during the 1940s 'David Whitebeard' was a well-known character. Living rough in a makeshift tent pitched near the mouth of the Coseley canal tunnel, David was a kindly figure—apart from when he saw stray dogs which he would pursue with a stick!

In 1971 Sedgley and Gornal (like the rest of the borough of Dudley) was one of the last areas in the country to be allocated postcodes. The first postcodes were allocated to the Norwich area in 1962.

During the Second World War the miners at Baggeridge Colliery were given a coal allowance of one ton a month. In many cases they would sell it to friends or relations (the average cost was 2/6d. However, this was firmly against the regulations and on occasion miners appeared in court accused of selling coal. In most cases a hefty fine (up to 15/-) was imposed.

In 1922 Sedgley Urban District Council had plans to acquire eight acres of land close to the Green Dragon pub in order to build a cemetery serving Upper Gornal. The Council appointed a committee to negotiate with the owners of the land. Unfortunately an agreement could not be reached and the cemetery was never built.

The old Manor of Sedgley covered about 12 square miles and included nine villages—Ettingshall, Sedgley, Gospel End, Cotwall End, Upper Gornal, Lower Gornal, Woodsetton, Coseley and Brierley.

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We have £50.00 supermarket vouchers awaiting the two lucky winners of our competition this month – you could be one of them! Each winner will be able to select their choice of supermarket from either Morrisons, Sainsburys or Asda. So why not give it a go!

All you have to do is search out the square below for the 16 words associated with **VILLAGE VOICE** 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 **Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025**. Good luck!

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

#### HIDDEN WORDS

1. LOCAL
2. PUMP
3. NEWS
4. TEASERS
5. THREE
6. VOICE
7. PARISH
8. MONTHLY
9. COMMUNITY
10. VILLAGE
11. MAGAZINES
12. BRAIN
13. HISTORY
14. EDITIONS
15. PENN
16. WIN

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# A CASE OF MISTAKEN IDENTITY!

In 1899 Sedgley Police Court heard the case of the “disappearing son” when Isaiah Jones was summonsed to appear before the magistrates.

Isaiah, his wife Mary and three children lived in Lower Gornal and he appeared in court because his son Joshua had not been attending school. When asked why his son had not been at school Isaiah stated that he did not have a son!

He told the magistrates that he had three children but they were all girls—Joan, Margaret and Alice. However, he did admit that his brother called Isaac did indeed have a son called Joshua—and that it so happened that they lived next door to each other.

The newspaper report of the time described Mr Jones’ demeanour as “happy” as he left court after being found not guilty after what was clearly an administrative error. That cheerfulness almost certainly quickly evaporated when he was served with a new summons on the steps of the court because neither Margaret nor Alice had been going to school!



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- ★ In August 1928 Frederick Higginbottom and his wife, May, were found guilty of keeping a betting house and acting as bookmakers without a licence. Following a tip-off the police kept watch on their house in Horsley Heath over four days during which they observed 39 men, 52 women, 28 girls and seven boys all entering the premises. The decision was taken to raid the house where betting slips and a large amount of cash was found. The couple were fined £48/10s.
- ★ At Stafford Assizes in December 1857 Sarah Cherrington was charged with the murder of a Sedgley woman called Susannah Cartwright. Cartwright was pregnant but could not afford to pay for a doctor to attend her. When she was about to give birth she engaged Cherrington to assist but it later appeared that she did not know what to do when complications set in. As a result Cartwright and her child died. Although the jury found Cherrington guilty they recommended that the Judge show her mercy. Indeed this is exactly what he did, allowing her to go free without penalty, saying that she had been motivated by “the kindest feelings”.
- ★ In 1877 magistrate—Isaac Spooner—fined Joseph Blackham, an 11 year old, 20/- (or in default three months imprisonment with hard labour) for assaulting Mary Ann Hickman at Ruiton. Apparently Blackham had shot at her with a catapult, hitting her in the eye. The magistrate condemned such bad behaviour, saying that it was totally unacceptable. Indeed, he said, he had heard of two cases where people had lost the sight in an eye through such antics—hence the substantial fine or alternative period in prison.

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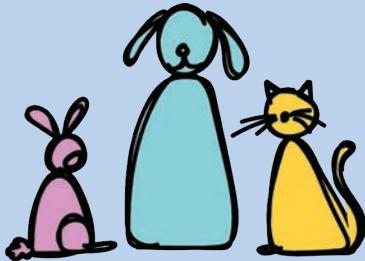
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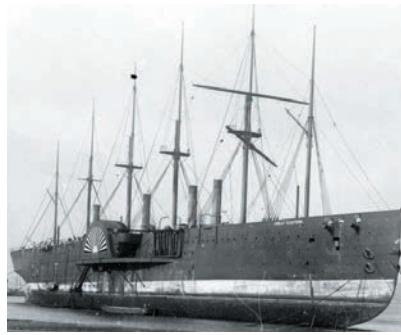
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Despite the fact that its scrap value alone was put at around £100,000 the ship sold for just £25,000. The new owner then chartered it to the Telegraph Construction Company for use in laying cables across the Atlantic. The great weight of the cables that the ship had to carry for this enterprise meant that a new, much larger and heavier anchor was needed and so Parkes were asked to make one weighing eight tons, a world record in those days. Following its service laying cables the 'Great Eastern' was used in various ways including as a mobile advertisement for Lewis's department store in Liverpool.



*The 'Great Eastern' was a marvel of its time but suffered problems throughout its lifetime.*



## TIPTON CHRISTMAS TREE OF LIGHT APPEAL 2025

The Tipton Civic Society, with the support of the Tipton and Coseley Building Society, is once again organising this year's Tree of Light Appeal to give local people the opportunity to remember lost loved ones at Christmas time whilst helping to raise money for local charities.

The Tree is illuminated and dedicated to the memory of lost loved ones whose names are entered onto a Roll of Remembrance displayed around the Tree which is located in Owen Street, on the corner of Wood Street.

The Tree lights will be switched on by the Mayor of Sandwell following a special remembrance service at St Paul's Community Centre, Brick Kiln Street, at 7pm on Friday 28th November.

Names can be entered by making a donation of £5 per name to the Appeal on application forms which are available from the Tipton and Coseley Building Society in Owen Street, Tipton Libraries, or from Keith Hodgkins on 0121 520 0080. Forms can also be downloaded from the Tipton Civic Society's website at [www.tiptoncivicsociety.co.uk](http://www.tiptoncivicsociety.co.uk)

Those of you who have donated in the past will have been sent a form in the post, but for those who haven't yet taken part, please think about supporting the Appeal which has raised £86,500 over the past fifteen years for local charities such as Acorns Children's Hospice, Hearing Dogs for Deaf People, Sandwell Crossroads Care, Sandwell Visually Impaired, Tipton Food Bank and many more.



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★ There was great controversy in Upper Gornal in March 1877 when the vicar of St. Peter's announced that he would not give permission for his parishioners to marry outside his parish unless they obtained his consent and pay him the necessary fees. Not surprisingly this upset many of those who wanted to get married in neighbouring parishes and questions were asked whether the vicar's ruling was indeed legal. Before an answer could be found, however, the vicar moved on to a new parish and calm was once again restored.

★ At the end of October 1900 a concert was given by scholars past and present of Coseley's Christ Church Schools. The first half included a series of songs performed by current pupils of the schools whilst the second half featured a work called Britannia, Queen of the Ocean involving some 30 performers. The concert was very well received by a capacity audience.

★ In 1909 it was announced that Frank Webb, a butcher of Louise Street, Gornal Wood, had been found dead at home with his throat cut. It seemed that he had been due to attend court to answer charges of persistent cruelty to his wife and that on the eve of his appearance at Sedgley Police Court he had taken his own life.

★ Originally the current Dormston Trading Estate on Burton Road was the site of Cartwright's Brickworks which employed many women from the Upper Gornal area. The rates of pay were known to be amongst the highest in the industry but the standards expected were very high—anyone found producing more than 5 sub-standard bricks in 1,050 was invariably sacked.

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## DRINKS: MAKE MINE A GIN—AGAIN!

A review by Trevor Langley

And now for the second of our independent reviews on drinks around the world by Trevor Langley. Trevor is an independent reviewer of all things drink—he sources his own companies and has absolutely no connection at all to the brands which he chooses to write about. We thought this was a little different to our normal articles so now over to Trevor as he reviews the multi award-winning company Ginagain.



For this quest I searched several gin producing companies, and, indeed, there are a good number of excellent producers of very fine gins. Multi award-winning Ginagain Spirits received recognition from the outset and has grown to have many 'devotees' of their gins. Based in London, Ginagain Spirits has earned the appreciation of numerous gin connoisseurs. Ginagain Spirits was founded by Rick Allen. Enjoying his childhood around the Central Valley in California, USA, Rick was fascinated by the vast array of orange groves and became interested in the citrus and fruit farms in the area. His travels to England, during the 1990's inspired Rick to further his love of gin with California citrus inclusions. Time progressed and, with his wife Stephanie, they worked tirelessly on creating exceptional productions of fine, handcrafted, tiny batch, London Dry gins, utilising botanicals from global origins and California citrus, all to a great advantage.

Ginagain – Gin 01 (42% vol) has excellent overtones of California orange peel and cubeb pepper berries. Eleven ingredients are used to bring this gin to perfection, which has a hint of spice. I found this gin to be well-balanced throughout, from the bouquet, through the flavour and mouthfeel and then on to the palate's delight. Indulgent and welcoming.

Ginagain – Gin 02 (42% vol) has organic California grapefruit, fresh basil and ginger root as the ingredients for this delectation. Notes of grapefruit are forward for this production, then, the basil inclusion is detected, adding a most pleasant herbal contribution. The ginger comes in, with its warmth and a spicy hint. I found this high-quality gin to be crisp and invigorating, with a very good balance. Delightful and exceptional.

No artificial ingredients, sweeteners or artificial flavourings are used in the productions of these London Dry gins. Their very informative website has some more interesting details and online ordering is easy too with orders being dispatched quickly and efficiently. A gin company with commitment and dedication to the grand end results.

Ginagain Spirits Limited, 71 – 75 Shelton Street, Covent Garden, London WC2H 9JQ.  
E-mail: [cheers@ginagain.com](mailto:cheers@ginagain.com) Website: [www.ginagain.com](http://www.ginagain.com)

**COMING UP IN THE  
DECEMBER EDITION:**  
*“Wines: Some sparkling  
sensations”*



As always,  
Enjoy!

*Trevor Langley*

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# LEST WE FORGET



**On the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918 the First World War—the bloodiest war mankind has ever known—came to an end. It has been estimated that 16 million were killed in the conflict with a further 20 million wounded. Moira Michael, an American professor, was deeply moved by the plight of those who had lost loved ones or who had been injured in the War. She was looking for a way to raise money especially for those who were disabled through the fighting and then she read a short poem...**

REMEMBRANCE DAY



The poem had been written by a young doctor called John Macrae who was serving on the Front Line with the Canadian Armed Forces in the Flanders region of Belgium. Just 15 lines long the poem "In Flander's fields" inspired Michael not only to write her own poem but to always wear a poppy in remembrance. The idea caught on and soon she was purchasing silk poppies to sell to friends and relations in order to raise funds for ex-servicemen in her home state of Georgia. Within two years she was campaigning for the poppy

to be recognised as the American national symbol of remembrance, a feat she achieved shortly afterwards. The use of the poppy to raise funds for ex-servicemen and their families spread to France and then—following the formation of the British Legion in 1921—it was introduced into the UK. Such was the enthusiasm with which the idea was greeted that consideration had to be given quickly as to how the paper poppies could be manufactured (the first ones had come from France). In 1922 Major George Howson MC took on the task of making the first batch of British poppies in a small factory on the Old Kent Road in London. His staff were five disabled ex-servicemen and his total capital was £2,000.

The poppy was designed to be easy for disabled ex-servicemen to make and the same design is still used today (although different materials are now utilised and modern machinery is used in the manufacturing process).

Within months the workforce had increased ten fold and by 1925 it became clear that the existing factory was too small and so new premises were found at Richmond in Surrey where today work continues in producing poppies. In its heyday the factory employed some 365 people and manufactured a staggering 45 million poppies a year. In order to give you an insight into the work that is actually done for Poppy Day, the national total for 2024 was a staggering £51.4 million.



*Life on the Front Line was incredibly tough and for many men their life expectancy once they had reached the trenches was only a matter of months, if not days.*



The Poppy Factory's employment consultants are based regionally throughout England and Wales and offer regular one-to-one contact with veterans and their families. Their remit is simply to do their utmost to help them on their journey towards employment. They help with CV writing, job search, support with training, exploring new opportunities, interview preparation, overcoming barriers and in-work support. Each year their specialist team are able to help hundreds of people who are facing some of the most challenging situations in the Armed Forces to take positive steps forward on their own.

The actual poppy plant is unusual insofar as when it drops its seeds at the end of each summer the seeds themselves do not germinate unless the soil on which they have fallen is disturbed. During the First World War large areas of Flanders, a region of Belgium were devastated with virtually no buildings, trees or other vegetation left standing. All that was left was a sea of mud, shell holes and abandoned trenches.

Nature, of course, has a way of regenerating itself and the following spring plants started to appear. The first of these were the poppies whose seeds having lain dormant for years started to appear following the disturbance to the ground. In 1915 the sight of a sea of red poppies inspired John Macrae, a doctor in the Canadian Armed Forces to write in his diary a short poem. He had just buried one of his close friends and the cross on the grave was surrounded by poppies. His poem—"In Flanders fields" was published in 'Punch' magazine and was to become one of the best known poems to be written during the First World War and it in turn inspired others to write other poems with the same sentiments. We now go back to the beginning of this article to Moira Michael who wrote a poem called "We Shall Keep the Faith":

*"Oh you who sleep in Flanders Fields  
Sleep sweet—to rise anew!  
We caught the torch you threw  
And Holding high, we keep the Faith  
With all who died.*

*We cherish, too, the poppy red  
That grows on fields where valour led;  
It seems to signal to the skies  
That blood of heroes never dies  
But lends a lustre to the red  
Of the flower that blooms above the dead  
In Flanders fields.*

*And now the Torch and Poppy Red  
We wear in honour of our dead.  
Fear not that ye have died for naught.  
We'll teach the lesson that you wrought  
In Flanders fields."*

*This poem was published worldwide and the tradition of wearing the poppy "in honour of our dead" was born. This year the Royal British Legion's pledge is to raise in excess of last year's figure so please do support them in whatever way that you can and give generously.*



# OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

*'OXYDOL! For a bigger tub of richer suds!'*

Pete Murray joined 'The Station of the Stars' in 1950. As an actor he had toured Britain and also appeared in James Stewart's film, 'No Highway'.

In the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg's Junglinster wireless studios he was soon presenting an exhausting raft of record programmes, plus features prepared on film tape back in London. The salary was £15 per week—which was £5 more than Teddy Johnson had been getting.

Dance band drummer and singer, Teddy, had turned his vocalising duets with Pearl Carr into a much more successful money-spinner, with smash hits such as the 'Eurovision 'Sing Little Birdie' (1959'.

Richard Nichols' carefully researched book 'Radio Luxembourg—the Station of the Stars', (1983) commences in the 1920s and '30s, when international arguments over the possession of radio wavelengths were being, shall we say, 'fiercely aired'.

Here, the BBC was outraged at the thought of long-wave competition. Even worse, "Dash it, those bounders in Normandy and Luxembourg are advertising. 'Tea! Soap!' To quote the BBC's indignant Toytown resident on Children's Hour, Mister Growser, Disgraceful!".

Luxembourg's powerful transmitters were seized by Germany on the outbreak of World War Two. William Joyce, 'Lord Haw-Haw', tried to feed Britain with propaganda.

When this 'Humbug for Hamburg' started rambling on, presenters from the re-named 'Radio International (Fécamp, Normandy), such as Roy Plomely and Bob Danvers-Walker, had to get back to England.

According to 'My H. Samuel Everight Watch' it was just in the nick of time!

**By John Sparry, Ridge Cot, 15 Enville Road, Wall Heath**

**Mobile: 07831 342209**

*(Sorry folks, no texts or voicemails accepted—I just can't cope with that!)*



*Cats loved the extra warmth of valve radios. On the Light Programme, Music While You Work, the Charlie Katz appearances included Ocarina and 26 other instruments.*

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# BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

1	Three square meals	7	Tale of two cities
2	Back to square one	8	Nice to see you
3	No two ways about it	9	One foot in the grave
4	Honour among thieves	10	Man overboard
5	Foul Language	11	Double cream
6	Spell of bad weather	12	Crossword puzzle

**So how many did you get? If you managed to work out 10 or more then you truly are genius level! Look for more crafty Brainteasers in the December edition.**

## COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **OCTOBER** edition was **LODGES** (it was missing from the grid). The two lucky winners who each receive a **FAMILY PASS** to the fabulous **WEST MIDLANDS SAFARI PARK** are:

**SALLY DAVIES** of Kingswinford and  
**MRS M HICKMAN** of Tipton

You can find this month's competition on page 34.

**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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Courtesy of **THE ROBIN** in Bilston, we have two tickets up for grabs for one lucky winner. All you have to do to be entered is to send your **NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **EMAIL ADDRESS** to [villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk) or write to us at The Robin Tickets, Forge House, 50 Redhall Road, Dudley DY3 2NL. The lucky winner will be drawn on **Friday, 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025 – GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **JANEY SIMPSON** of **BRIERLEY HILL** who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **OCTOBER** edition.



**BRING ON THE CHRISTMAS CHEER—THE FABULOUS  
FESTIVE GIFT FAIR WILL SOON BE HERE! THURSDAY 13TH-  
SUNDAY 16TH NOVEMBER AT THE NEC BIRMINGHAM**

In our October edition we set a competition to win 20 x pairs of tickets to the Festive Gift Fair—here are the lucky winners!

**Nicholas Phillips of Lower Gornal**

**Susan Abbotts of Dudley**

**Graham Follos of Kingswinford**

**Charlotte Preece of Dudley**

**Wendy Weremiu of Telford**

**Sarah Barnes of Kingswinford**

**Mark Mullett of Lower Gornal**

**Christine Piotrowicz of Swindon**

**Janey Simpson of Brierley Hill**

**Alison Watkins of Wordsley**

**Michael Green of Dudley**

**Leanne Guest of Kingswinford**

**Angela Woolley of Pattingham**

**Jacqueline Hartshorn of Dudley**

**Neil Taylor of Halesowen**

**Sharon Breakspear of Tipton**

**Carole Eaton of Stourbridge**

**Julie Nicholls of Coseley**

**Karen Lloyd of Lower Gornal**

**Charlotte Haycock of Dudley**

Also in our October edition, our good friend and author, Graham Fisher, very kindly set aside three signed copies of his new book *'A BAKER'S DOZEN: inspirational characters and their impact in my world, with philosophical annotations'*

for us to offer to three lucky winners.

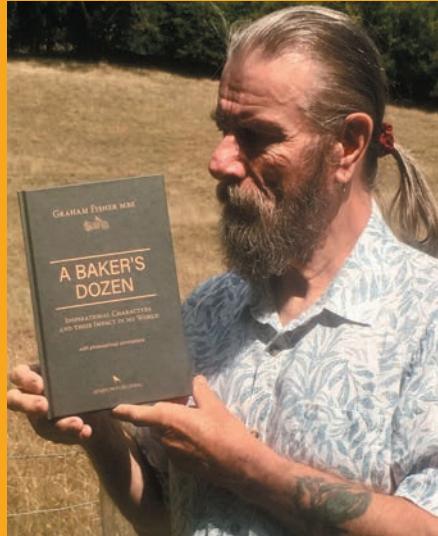
The draw has now taken place and we offer congratulations to:

**Mrs Jean Homer of Lower Gornal**

**Joe Lees of Wall Heath**

**David Payne of Halesowen**

Your books will be winging their way to you shortly.



# The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



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Sunday, 21st December  
Carol Service at 4.00pm

Sunday, 21st December  
Christingle Service at 4.00pm

Wednesday, 24th December  
Midnight Mass at 11.30pm

Thursday, 25th December  
Mass at 10.30am



### ST JAMES THE GREAT CHURCH, LOWER GORNAL Church Street, Lower Gornal DY3 2PF

Sunday, 30th November  
Joint Benefice Mass Service at 10.30am  
and  
Christingle Service at 6.00pm

Sunday, 7th December  
Carol Service at 4.00pm

Wednesday, 24th December  
Christmas Eve Service at 7.00pm

Thursday, 1st January  
Mass at 12.00 noon

# The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP

## 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...

**13th November**—A Slow Passage up the Cut by speaker Dave Briscoe.

**20th November**—Stories of English Coinage by speaker Phillip Griffiths.

**27th November**—Villains, Rogues & Peaky Blinders - West Midlands Police Museum.

**4th December**—The Life and Times of Sid James by speaker Andy French

**11th December**—Black Country Christmas with Ian Bott

**18th December**—Clive of India with wonderful Max Keen

This then leads on to our Christmas Break—we will return on Thursday, 8th January 2026.

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

For further information, please contact Sidney Millinson on 01902 270430

Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group

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11am**

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# The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



## SEDGLEY LOCAL HISTORY Society

[www.sedgleylocalhistory.org.uk](http://www.sedgleylocalhistory.org.uk) (also on Facebook)

Schoolteachers, Andrew Barnett and Trevor Genge were co-founders of the Society in 1984. Andrew launched the Sedgley Local History Museum (closed 2004) and Trevor published five books on the Sedgley Manor villages. Both were avid researchers and staunch supporters of conservation projects.

### COMING UP...

#### THURSDAY 13<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER – 7:30 pm

*Over by Christmas?* Quintin Watt examines the reaction of Black Country folk to the outbreak of the Great War. The widespread belief of a short war soon took hold.

#### THURSDAY 8<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2026 – 7:30 pm

Film Night & Quiz – Number 3: *Members & Visitors Evening* – Enjoy some short films and brain teasers.

#### THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY – 7:30pm

*History of Dudley Castle:* Max Keen dresses up and plays characters to vividly take us through centuries of castle life.

#### THURSDAY 12<sup>TH</sup> MARCH – 7:30 pm

*Rogues, Villains & Peaky Blinders:* Corinne Brazier has researched the real lives of Birmingham's criminals and gangsters. The amazing true stories beat fiction!

**VISITORS ALWAYS WELCOME.**

Individual talks—£2.

St Andrew's Church, Bilston Street,  
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## St Chad's Church

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## Christmas Fayre

Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> November

11am – 2pm

Father Christmas in his Grotto

11.30am – 1.30pm

Christmas Raffle, Tombola, Home Baked Cakes, Toys & Books, Plants, Groceries, Chocolate Tombola, Bottle Stall, etc.

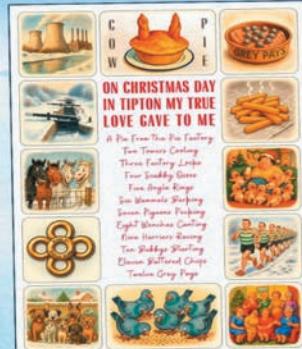
Bar Open, Sandwiches, Snacks & Hot Pork Baps on sale!



We are busy preparing our DECEMBER editions of Village Voice Magazine. If you are a place of worship within the areas of: *Sedgley/Gornal/Coseley/Tipton* *Kingswinford/Wall Heath/Wordsley* *Wombourne/Swindon/Penn/Kinver* and would like a free mention of your services over the Christmas period within our Parish Pump feature, please do get in touch by email at [villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk)

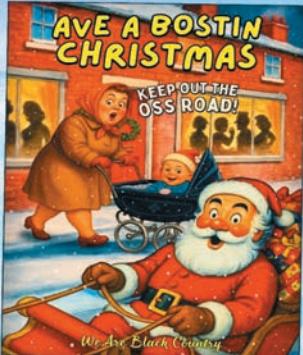


# The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



ON CHRISTMAS DAY  
IN TIPTON MY TRUE  
LOVE GAVE TO ME

A Par From The Pie Factory  
Two Tavers Cooking  
Three Factory Larks  
Four Soddy Dogs  
Five Angel Rings  
Six Womans Singing  
Seven Pipers Playing  
Eight Whistles Blowing  
Ten Horses Racing  
Eleven Kittened Dogs  
Twelve Grey Pugs



Tipton Town  
Libraries  
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Group has two  
new boston

Black Country Christmas cards  
for sale this year. They are now  
available from Tipton Library and  
from the Black Country Hub at  
Merry Hill Shopping Centre. Be  
sure to get yours in good time!



## DUDLEY SENIOR RAMBLERS



Dudley Senior Ramblers are an active rambling group for the over 50s which meets every second Wednesday of the month from different start points within a 10-15 mile radius of Dudley. The walks are approximately 5-7 miles long.

The group usually conclude the walks towards the end of November and will resume again in February 2026. As such they are actively recruiting new members for 2026.

If this is of interest to you, please contact Jayne Keay (Members' Secretary) at [mjkeay@btinternet.com](mailto:mjkeay@btinternet.com)



*All Saints' Christmas Fayre*  
Saturday, 6th December 2025  
10.30am-2.00pm  
All Saints' Church Hall, Vicar Street  
Admission 20p

Stalls include: Tombola—Bottle Stall—DVDs and books—Jigsaws—Homemade Cakes—Fair Trade—Children's Table—Plant Stall—Craft Stalls—Treasure Hunt—Chocolate Stall and Raffle.

Refreshments available.  
The church is open for  
*'A Taste of Christmas'*

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