

FREE

# Village Voice

*Chris Smith - We Remember!*

ISSUE 219 | DECEMBER 2025



Community magazine for Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

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# Village Voice

Community magazine for  
Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

## Cover story

Christmas is, of course, almost upon us and the annual frenzy of buying presents has well and truly started – indeed, some of the “Christmas” sales actually began in October! If, however, you can put aside all the commercialism that abounds, Christmas can still remain a time of quiet reflection with the family. Many of us strive to keep the familiar Christmas customs such as decorating the Christmas tree, a roast turkey lunch and even the King’s Speech. Indeed, even those that go abroad at this time of year still often look forward to maintaining the old traditions with Christmas trees and turkey sandwiches on the beach!

Wherever you are have a very Happy Christmas and a Prosperous and Peaceful New Year.

## Gail



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Please note that the closing date for our competition this month is **FRIDAY, 19<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 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 **2,000** copies of this edition of **Village Voice** are delivered throughout **Wombourne, Swindon, Penn and Kinver.**

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 **JANUARY 2026** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **THURSDAY, 18<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2025.** Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.



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, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025 – GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **MICHELLE GARRATT** of Tipton who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **NOVEMBER** edition.



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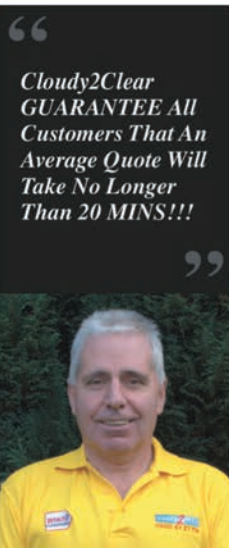
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**it's a fact!**

- ★ George Matthew Atkinson, formerly of Green Hill Farm, Wombourne, appeared at Manchester County Police Court in 1920 accused of bigamy. His wife gave evidence that they had married on 1st June 1907 but separated four years later. During the First World War he served overseas in the Army but when he returned on leave in 1915 they lived together for three days. She said that they last spoke in March 1919. The next witness was Alice Harper, a domestic servant, who said that she had known Atkinson since 1910 and that on 26th August 1918 she had “married” him. In his defence Atkinson said that he thought that being separated for seven years automatically annulled the marriage.
- ★ There was an interesting advertisement in the Wolverhampton Chronicle & Staffordshire Advertiser in August 1866. In the Situations Vacant column was the following job vacancy: “*Rabbit catcher—wanted, a married man to catch rabbits, overlook plantations and work on farm; wife to manage poultry. Good characters indispensable—Address: G., Post Office, Kinnerley.*”
- ★ In September 1833 the Red Lion in Wombourne was put up for auction. The main building comprised (according to the details) “*a large sitting kitchen with a bar behind the same and parlour, back kitchen, spacious clubroom, with suitable bed-rooms and two good cellars*”. A number of outbuildings were also included—a stable, brewhouse and workshop “*that may be converted into stabling for six horses at trifling expense*”. The property was set in a half acre garden well stocked with fruit trees.

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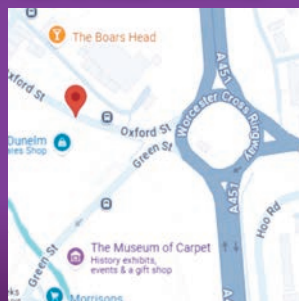
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## DIGGING DEEP

In 1895 the Earl of Dudley commissioned a technical survey to see whether large deposits of coal were to be found beneath his land beyond the western fringe of the Black Country coalfield. The report suggested that coal was to be found there—but at a significantly lower depth than in other areas. Despite this finding the Earl decided to



investigate further and test borings began in November 1896 in Baggeridge Wood. The borings proved unsuccessful as the bore rods broke, leaving the diamond tipped rods (worth £200 each) lost deep underground. A second test boring was made some distance away and this proved that a sizeable coal seam was present some 600 yards below the surface. Work immediately began in clearing the site and in February the first shaft of what was to become Baggeridge Colliery was sunk. The process of making the boring was slow and tortuous with a number of problems having to be overcome before, in July 1902 the first seam of coal was discovered.

Similar problems (including flooding and roof collapses) occurred when the second shaft was sunk in 1910 and for a long time it seemed that the Earl's investment in the enterprise was doomed to failure. However, such was the ingenuity and determination of the colliery teams that solutions were found and the Baggeridge Colliery became one of the largest and most productive pits in the country, producing coal in prestigious amounts until its closure in 1968.

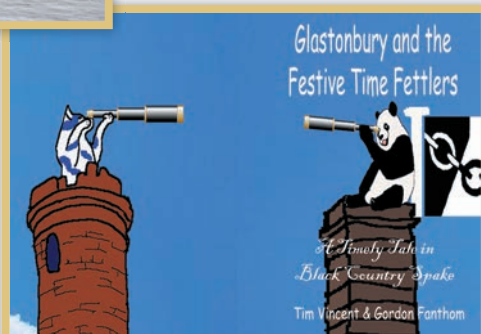
# GLASTONBURY AND BONE'S PURRFECT BLACK COUNTRY CRIMBO

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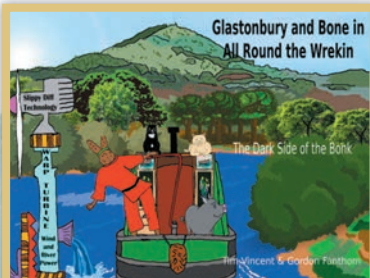


Glastonbury and Bone's Purrfect Black Country Crimbo Living Spake special edition is part of the Glastonbury Tails Picture book series about the adventures of the Highly Lovable Cats and tells the tale of how Glastonbury and Bone rescue the APP's (Amanda and Peter Panda) who are trapped in a huge snow drift on their way to the Crimbo Market to buy their Crimbo Bamboo; eventually they are rescued by Glastonbury and Bone with some help from the Thai Hares

who are a special form of Kung Fu Tyre fitters next to Grease Monkeys Garage and drive around in a Bright Yellow Pick Up truck. The Book also contains a special Crimbo Version of the Glastonbury Song. Also available in the Glastonbury Tails series is the Festive Time Fettlers picture book where the Glastonbury, Bone and the Bargies travel back in time to a Victorian Crimbo Market aboard the Time Rattler Canal barge.



All around the Wrekin, the dark side of the Bonk is the latest Picture book in the Glastonbury Tails series and tells the tale of how the crazy critter crew are called upon in a mission to save the famous Spanner Bridge from collapsing into the River Severn far away from home on the Dark side of the Bonk.



Moley Moley the Black Country Cahnsul's mining expert has been using AS (Artificial Saftness) to develop stronger Hexagonal shapes for pot holes with the help of Professor Buzz Word. Introducing the new Improver Apprentice 'Rattle Can' and Badgerridge and Brockma, the Cahnsul Snoopers, to the team. Grease Monkey, Glastonbury, Bone and all the crazy critter crew from the Glastonbury Tails picture book series wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Keep an eye out for the new book called '1966' – coming out soon.



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## KILLED FOR HIS BELIEFS

**Born in Wombourne in 1558, John Sugar was always something of a rebel. The son of a priest, Sugar went to St Mary's Hall, Oxford but left without taking a degree—it is said that he would not take the Oath of Supremacy which he needed to in order to have a degree conferred upon him.**

He was ordained into the Church of England and he moved to Cannock where he was given a parish to serve. Unfortunately, however, he soon found that the Protestant way of doing things was not to his liking and so—in 1601—he went off to the English College at Douai in northern France in order to become a Roman Catholic priest.

He returned to England at a time when the practising of Catholicism was still illegal and in 1603—after he had preached a particularly

strident sermon—he was arrested at Rowington in Warwickshire together with a man called Robert Greswell. Both men were taken to Warwick where they were imprisoned without trial for almost a year. Then, after a very short hearing at which neither of them were allowed to speak on their own behalf,

both Sugar (for being a priest) and Greswell (for assisting him) were condemned to death by hanging. On 16th July 1604 both were taken to the gallows and hanged, although it is said that Sugar was cut down before he was completely dead and that he only died two hours later.



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**it's a fact!**

- ★ In 1978 three charities designed to assist youngsters from Enville with their education were combined into a single organisation known as the Enville Education Charity. The first which was established by Edward Gravenor in 1654 was Enville Grammar School, a free school for six boys from poor families within the parish. It was initially financed to the tune of £5 per annum from rent collected from land at Swindon. Later a Sunday School was added and the number of pupils increased to 35—15 of whom were supported financially by Lord Stamford. This total had grown to 63 including 20 girls) when it became a National School. The other two charities were Henry Grey's fund for apprentices and the Peter Lafargue fund for providing books for local schoolchildren.
- ★ A sad event occurred in Swindon in July 1866 when a young boy, Thomas Carter (14) was killed. He had been raking weeds out of the pool beside the waterwheel at the Watkin's Ironworks when he fell in. He became trapped between the water-wheel and the mill wall and when his body was rescued it was found that his head had been crushed. An inquest was held at the Old Bush Inn at Swindon and the jury passed a verdict of "found dead".
- ★ There was an unusual vehicle collision in Warstones Road, Penn in April 1971. The crash – between a milk float and a council lawn mower—resulted in the police, ambulance and fire brigade all being called to the scene of the accident. Although the mower was badly damaged injuries caused to the driver—George Brown—were only of a minor nature.





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# **GIVEAWAY!**



**Our good friends down at Wombourne Tyres, have very kindly given us a Gift Voucher which enables the lucky winner to £50.00 off a set of four new tyres.**

**There is not even a question to answer! Just drop your name, address and telephone number to either**  
**[villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk)**

**or in the post to:**

**Wombourne Tyres Competition, Forge House,  
50 Redhall Road, Gornal Wood, Dudley DY3 2NL**

**or via our website**

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**The competition will be drawn on  
Friday, 19th December.**

**GOOD LUCK!**

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# Christmas

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Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> – 8.30am-6.30pm

Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> – 8.30am-6.30pm



Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> – 7.30am-2.00pm

25<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> – CLOSED

Monday 29<sup>th</sup> – 8.30am-6.00pm

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> – 8.30am-6.00pm

31<sup>st</sup> – 1<sup>st</sup> – CLOSED



Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January normal hours

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a very Merry Christmas and  
a Happy New Year*

*Thank you everyone for your  
support during the past year  
Phil, Ryan, Izzy and Jack*

## DAY TOURS

Tue 16 Dec Broadway Festive Lights £24  
Sat 20 Dec Worcester Xmas Tree Trail £17  
Thu 1 Jan New Year Tour & Lunch £51  
Sat 3 Jan Lichfield & MacArthur Glen £20  
Sat 10 Jan Banbury & Stratford-Upon-Avon £23

Sun 25 Jan Stamford & Peterborough £25  
Sat 31 Jan Welshpool & Oswestry £24  
Sat 7 Feb Liverpool £26  
Sat 14 Feb Snowdrops at Rode Hall £30  
Sat 21 Feb Leighton Buzzard & Aylesbury £25



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17 Mar	SIDMOUTH IN SPRINGTIME	5 days	£520
30 Mar	ISLES OF SCILLY	5 days	£980
9 Apr	DUTCH FLOWERS & WINDMILLS	5 days	£875
20 Apr	HARROGATE & YORKSHIRE DALES	5 days	£590
11 May	KENTISH GOLD	5 days	£600
7 June	HEXHAM & NORTHERN MAGIC	5 days	£600
15 June	ST AGNES & CORNISH GEMS	7 days	£795

**Price includes dinner, bed & breakfast and excursions.**

## DON'T FORGET TO CARE FOR YOUR FISH!

With the cold weather now upon us it is worthwhile remembering that fish in garden ponds are particularly vulnerable to predation from herons.

The number of herons in the areas has over the years increased dramatically and with food harder to come by they are now often seen trying to take fish from garden ponds. Many of these unwelcome visitors are juvenile birds and as well

as feeding their hunger, they also practice their hunting techniques. The result is they may well kill a lot more fish than they actually need. The best way of thwarting these killing machines is to cover the pond with a net. It is also worthwhile trying to make sure that there is not a clear 'flight path' into the pond (they are such big birds that they need a lot of room to land safely).

There have been a few reports of another ace fisherman—the Kingfisher—making an appearance in a few local gardens. Whilst it is always thrilling see such a beautiful creature it too can easily clear a pond of fish within minutes. To reduce the likelihood of this happening make sure that there are no obvious perches from which the bird could launch itself.





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# it's a fact!

Over the years it has been “all change” when it comes to the names of many of the areas and streets of Wombourne—just consider these:

**Of all the roads in Wombourne, School Road has probably had the most names. At various times it has been Bobbington Road, Wombourne Lane, Vicarage Lane, School Lane and, from the 1930s, School Road.**

**On modern-day maps it is called Battlefield Hill but in the past this part of the A449 was known both as Red Lion Hill (after the pub seen right) and Stourbridge Road.**



**Until the Second World War, Church Road in Wombourne was called Over Street.**

**Carriers Fold was named after the Carrier family who, for many years, ran a number of businesses from the premises. Most notable was their role as the village undertakers and coffin-makers.**

**Maypole was named after the Maypole pub which once stood on the site where Maypole House now stands. At one time Maypole Street and Gravel Hill were known as Windmill Bank Street (although frequently it was referred to just as ‘The Bank’.**

**The High Street was once called Moises Hall Street, although again locals frequently just called it ‘The Street’.**

**The east end of the High Street is still sometimes referred to as Smallbrook although in the past it rejoiced in the names of ‘Townsend’ and ‘Sodom’.**

**Ounsdale was originally called Hollendene meaning that it was a valley where holly grew.**



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## DID YOU KNOW?

Hidden deep under Baggeridge Park are two diamond-tipped mining drills that were lost when the first trial bore holes were drilled in an attempt to find coal in the area at the end of the 19th century

In 1730 the Vicar of Wombourne made himself extremely unpopular by imposing 'tithes' on businesses and self employed workers in the area. The Heath Forge was required to pay 3s/4d and Swindon Forge 2s/4d. Hammermen' had to pay 6d a year.

Himley Country Hotel is based on the old village schoolhouse and room originally built by the Earl of Dudley to educate the children of his estate workers.

In Romania (and many other countries in what was the Ottoman Empire) Sarmale, cabbage leaves stuffed with pork and served with polenta (known as Mamaliga), is served along with a range of pork sausages and Piftie which is a form of jelly made from pigs' feet. This is frequently accompanied by a fruit brandy called Palinka.



Plum pudding, also known as Christmas Pudding has a rich history dating back to medieval England, evolving from a savoury dish to a beloved sweet dessert which traditionally is served during the holiday season. Early recipes included meat, root vegetables and spices creating a hearty meal often served during religious festivities. By the 14th century, the dish began to evolve, incorporating dried fruits and sweeteners as sugar became more easily accessible.



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## BRAINTEASERS

**We end 2025 with another batch of devious Brainteasers. If you by chance need the answers they can be found on page 56. Good luck!**

- Two barrels contain the same amount of water. The water temperature in one (barrel A) is 47°F and the other (barrel B) is 29°F. Two cricket balls of the same size and weight are dropped simultaneously from the same height into each barrel. Which ball will touch the bottom of the barrel first?
- To paint two lines dividing a motorway into three lanes costs £1000 a mile. What would it cost to paint lines to divide the road into six lanes over a distance of six miles?
- Rearrange the letters of NEW DOOR to make one word. A clue is that the answer ends in 'd'.
- John has three sons. The eldest is four years older than the second son who in turn is four years older than the youngest who is exactly half the age of the eldest. How old are the three sons?
- And now for a WORDBAT! All you have to do is to identify the word or phrase.

D	D
O	O
O	O
G	G
O	O
N	N

# GLASTONBURY AND BONE'S PURRFECT BLACK COUNTRY CRIMBO

## Living Spake Special Edition

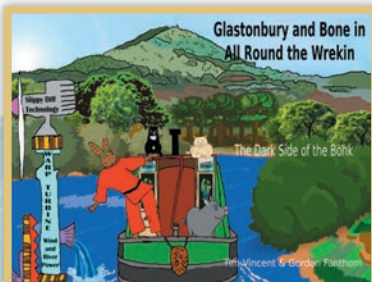


Glastonbury and Bone's Purrfect Black Country Crimbo Living Spake special edition is part of the Glastonbury Tails Picture book series about the adventures of the Highly Lovable Cats and tells the tale of how Glastonbury and Bone rescue the APP's (Amanda and Peter Panda) who are trapped in a huge snow drift on their way to the Crimbo Market to buy their Crimbo Bamboo; eventually they are rescued by Glastonbury and Bone with some help from the Thai Hares

who are a special form of Kung Fu Tyre fitters next to Grease Monkeys Garage and drive around in a Bright Yellow Pick Up truck. The Book also contains a special Crimbo Version of the Glastonbury Song. Also available in the Glastonbury Tails series is the Festive Time Fettlers picture book where the Glastonbury, Bone and the Bargies travel back in time to a Victorian Crimbo Market aboard the Time Rattler Canal barge.



All around the Wrekin, the dark side of the Bonk is the latest Picture book in the Glastonbury Tails series and tells the tale of how the crazy critter crew are called upon in a mission to save the famous Spanner Bridge from collapsing into the River Severn far away from home on the Dark side of the Bonk.



Moley Moley the Black Country Cahnsul's mining expert has been using AS (Artificial Saftness) to develop stronger Hexagonal shapes for pot holes with the help of Professor Buzz Word. Introducing the new Improver Apprentice 'Rattle Can' and Badgerridge and Brockma, the Cahnsul Snoopers, to the team. Grease Monkey, Glastonbury, Bone and all the crazy critter crew from the Glastonbury Tails picture book series wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Keep an eye out for the new book called '1966' – coming out soon.

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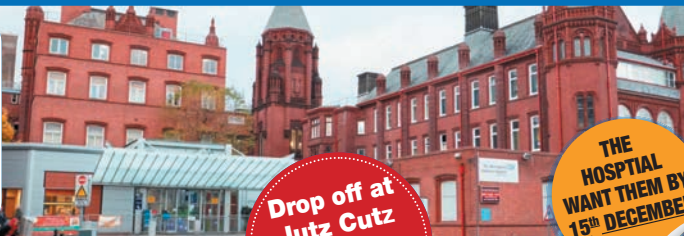
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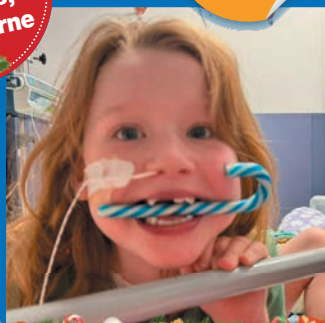
# SANTA DROP 2025

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FOLLOW US ON



# it's a fact!

- ★ The centre of Envile is said to be haunted by the ghost of Bill Pitt and his dog. Pitt was arrested for vagrancy and kept in the village stocks overnight. The following morning he and his dog (who had refused to leave his master) were both found dead from exposure.
- ★ An inquest held at the Greyhound Inn, Lower Penn heard the gruesome and gory details of the body of a young child being found in a wagon load of manure in January 1864. Two men in the employ of Mr Jukes of Lower Penn had collected the manure from horses near the GWR station in the centre of Wolverhampton. When they reached Lower Penn and started to unload the cart they found the badly decomposed body.
- ★ Until 1835 there was an ancient monument known as 'The Giant's Throw' in a field about a mile from Kinver Edge. It was said that the monument—a large upright stone—had been hurled from the Edge by a giant (or, as some said, the Devil). Unfortunately the farmer on whose property it was decided to break it up to enable him to plough the land and now there is no sign of it.
- ★ 1857 saw a meeting of local shoemakers take place in Wombourne in order to fix the price of shoes which, they felt, was too low. They agreed an overall increase of 20% on all prices—but also said that they would try to promote wooden clogs for working men rather than leather boots in order to reduce the demand for leather.
- ★ For many years the “plum pudding bell” was rung in Kinver every day of the month before Christmas.



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Our friends at the Odeon Cinema complex on Merry Hill have very kindly sent us 2 x family passes to give away to the two lucky winners of this month's competition. So, pen at the ready and get finding those hidden words and, who knows, you could be a winner of our competition this month.

All you have to do is search out the square below for the 16 words associated with **ODEON CINEMA** 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, 19<sup>th</sup> December 2025**. Good luck!

S	T	N	E	V	E	M	E	R	R	E
T	S	O	C	N	O	E	D	O	S	S
A	T	N	E	E	W	R	W	D	C	E
E	N	Y	V	P	M	R	E	I	R	S
S	L	L	I	H	N	Y	N	O	E	A
E	V	V	L	L		E	C	N	E	E
T	E	F	I	L	M	T	E	A	N	L
S	F	A	C	A	M	A	M	T	S	E
O	L	P	S	M	L	I	F	S	C	R
C	O	F	E	E	E	F	F	O	C	S
P	O	P	C	O	R	N	O	C	O	P

### HIDDEN WORDS

1. ODEON
2. CINEMA
3. RELEASES
4. NEW
5. MERRY
6. POPCORN
7. HILL
8. COSTA
9. FILMS
10. VIP
11. FAMILY
12. EVENTS
13. SCREENS
14. SEATS
15. LIVE
16. COFFEE

MISSING WORD:..... NAME:.....

ADDRESS: .....

POSTCODE:..... TEL NO:.....

EMAIL ADDRESS:.....

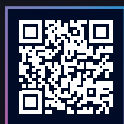
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# DECEMBER

AT THE ROBIN



## TALON

BEST OF EAGLES

FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER

FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER

**FLASH**

A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN

SATURDAY 6TH DECEMBER

**T.REXTASY**

A TRIBUTE TO T.REX AND MARC BOLAN

SUNDAY 7TH DECEMBER

**ROXY MAGIC**

A TRIBUTE TO ROXY MUSIC

THURSDAY 11TH DECEMBER

**JAGGED LITTLE PILL**

A TRIBUTE TO ALANIS MORISSETTE

FRIDAY 12TH DECEMBER

**FLEETWOOD BAC**

A TRIBUTE TO FLEETWOOD MAC

SATURDAY 13TH DECEMBER

**ROB LAMBERTI**

A TRIBUTE TO GEORGE MICHAEL

SUNDAY 14TH DECEMBER

**FRANKIE THE CONCERT**

A TRIBUTE TO FRANKIE VALLI

WEDNESDAY 17TH DECEMBER

**BLACK EYED SONS**

THURSDAY 18TH DECEMBER

**BOOT LED-ZEPPELIN**

A TRIBUTE TO LED-ZEPPELIN

FRIDAY 19TH DECEMBER

**TALON**

BEST OF EAGLES

SATURDAY 20TH DECEMBER

**KICK UP THE 80'S**

80'S PARTY NIGHT

SUNDAY 21ST DECEMBER

**MOSTLY AUTUMN**

PROGRESSIVE ROCK

SATURDAY 27TH DECEMBER

**MAET LIVE**

A TRIBUTE TO MEAT LOAF

SUNDAY 28TH DECEMBER

**AC/DSHE**

A TRIBUTE TO AC/DC

TUESDAY 30TH DECEMBER

**ELTONESQUE**

A TRIBUTE TO SIR ELTON JOHN

WEDNESDAY 31ST DECEMBER

**THE SUPERSKAS**

NEW YEARS EVE SPECIAL

**FLASH**  
A TRIBUTE TO QUEEN

FRIDAY 5TH DECEMBER



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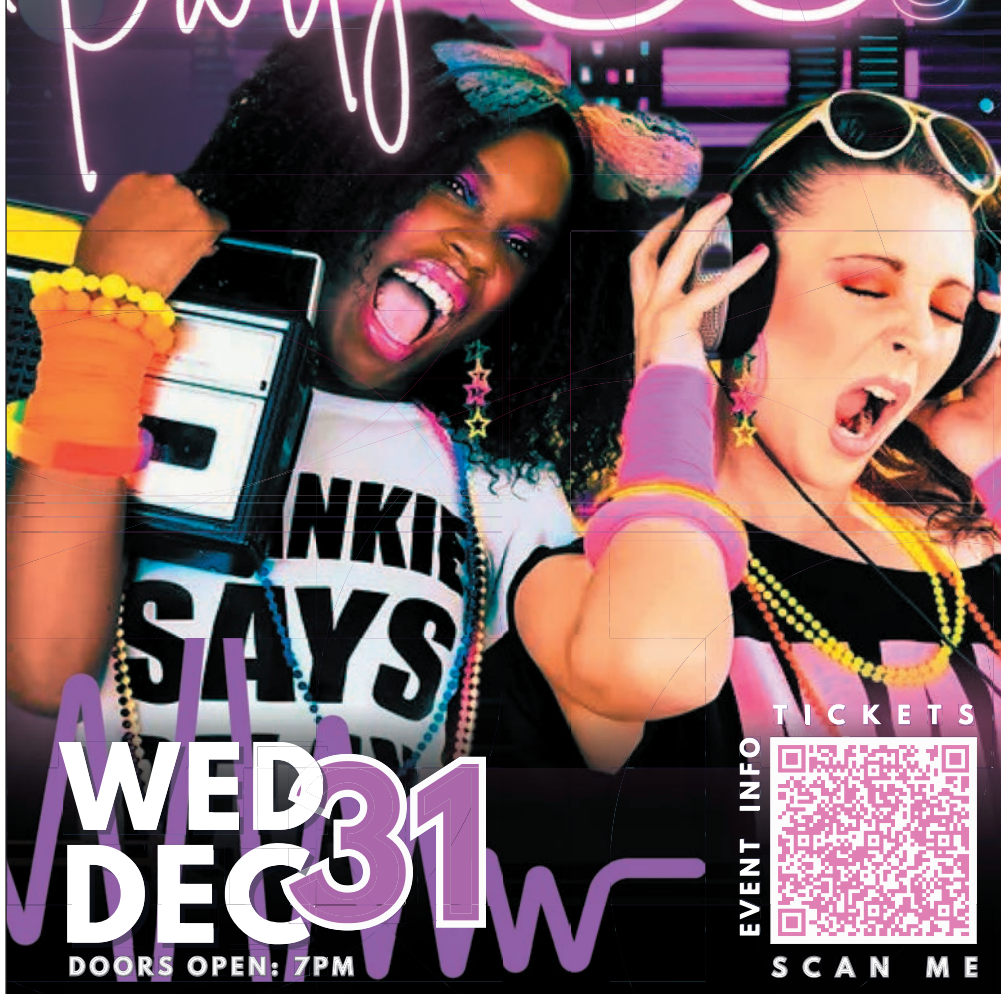


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BACK TO THE  
NEW YEAR'S  
EVE

80s

Party



WED  
DEC 31

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EVENT INFO

SCAN ME

# IN THIS MONTH

Over the years, December has been a busy month for interesting events and here is what we have come up with...

1697—Sir Christopher Wren's St Paul's Cathedral opened in London. The original cathedral had been severely damaged during the Great Fire of London in 1666. (2nd)

1791—The Observer, the oldest Sunday newspaper in the world, was first published (4th)

1911—Roald Amundsen became the first person to reach the South Pole (14th)

1919—Lady Nancy Astor became the first woman in the House of Commons (1st)

1939—The film *Gone with the Wind* starring Vivien Leigh and Clark Gable had its world premiere in Atlanta (15th)

1967—The first successful heart transplant was performed by Dr Christiaan Barnard in Cape Town, South Africa (3rd)

1980—John Lennon was assassinated in New York City by Mark David Chapman, a 25 year old security guard from Hawaii who hated how Lennon's expensive lifestyle contrasted with what he sang about. (8th)

2004—An estimated 230,000 people died and 1.5 million were left homeless by the tsunami that hit South Africa (26th)

2020—AT&T Inc's Warner Bros studio announced that all of its 2021 movies would stream online the same day they appeared in theatres because of the pandemic (3rd)

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Brierley Hill Samaritans are as vital as ever in supporting the Black Country. For 52 years the Samaritans at Brierley Hill has supported some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

The core Samaritans service is the telephone-based national helpline, available 24/7 every day of the year (free to call on 116 123). Whatever

people are going through in life, if they're having a tough time, they can call that number to talk to someone. All Samaritans are trained volunteers – none are paid for their time – and they are there to listen, focus on thoughts and give people space to explore their feelings.



The 80 volunteers at Brierley Hill Samaritans are also keen to make a difference out in the local community, attending outreach and awareness events throughout the year. In the last year, they have attended post-incident prevention work at railway stations following suicides on the railways locally), held awareness events at Merry Hill and a number

of other locations, attended Pride events, handed out leaflets and mental health tips at local Supermarkets and given talks to a variety of groups.

As with all charities around the country, regular funding is a major cause for concern to the Samaritans. Brierley Hill is an affiliated branch of the National Samaritans Charity, but it is also an independent charity in itself (registered Charity Number 1168020) and is entirely self-funded. Through a generous bequest some years ago, the branch is fortunate to operate from a purpose-built building, Beryl Hill, on Albion Street just off Brierley Hill High Street. However, in order to continue to operate they must cover their own annual branch running costs which are now approximately £25,000 a year. Volunteers specifically for the Fundraising and Outreach teams are therefore always a vital part of the branch.



It is interesting to note that 80% of people who contact the Samaritans do not express suicidal feelings at the time they are calling. However, by calling when they are having a tough time, they may have taken an important first step in allaying further despair by accessing a service where they are listened to in confidence, and they can talk freely without being judged.

Samaritans support and empower callers by helping them to explore their emotions and clarify what is causing their distress. Hopefully by doing so they can then make

sense of their situation and see a way forward. Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy and it is the vision of all who work for the Samaritans that fewer people die by suicide. Between 2021-2023 Dudley registered 8.8 suicides per 100,000 people, the highest rise in deaths for decades. Every death by suicide creates a ripple in our communities too, on average it is



estimated that 135 people are affected every time someone takes their life. This includes family, friends, work colleagues and the wider community. It is clear that the need for the Samaritans service is as vital today as it was in 1973, when a dedicated group of local people first came together to form the Brierley Hill branch. If you need emotional support please call the Samaritans free

of charge on 116 123. If you are interested in volunteering at Brierley Hill Samaritans or making a donation to help with the running costs of the branch, please visit their website: at [www.samaritans.org/branches/brierleyhill](http://www.samaritans.org/branches/brierleyhill) or follow them on Twitter: @BrierleyHillSamBrierley Hill Samaritans.

**Samaritans can be reached around the clock, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year** and respond every 10 seconds to a call from anyone who is struggling to cope and who needs someone to listen to them without judgement or pressure. If a caller needs an immediate response it is best to call on the phone using the **freephone number 116 123** or by emailing [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

Although Brierley Hill Branch is not always open, they are linked with other branches in such a way so that anyone who calls, whatever the time of day or night, is able to speak to a volunteer.



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## OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

### *David Humphries...Enthusiast*

My friend, David Humphries, a fellow pupil at Stourbridge King Edward VI, was a wealth of knowledge on local history and technical subjects. When doing National Service, I recall him telling me of all the masses of wireless apparatus of which he was in charge when on expedition with his officer—who also came from the local Midlands. ‘Come on Humph, get all the gear on the truck and let’s get going!’”

David was fascinated by all the science behind the making of coal gas—when at Tipton Gasworks. After, David had a spell with his father’s Ocker Hill milk business which led to superviseship with Midland Counties Dairies.

Later on when he was Manager at Littlewoods Stores there was a week when he worked nearly 130 hours, “we had ladies dresses retailing at £1.99.”

David, in one of our phone chats told me all that there was to know about the Oystermouth Horse Drawn Rail Service. David worked in managerial roles for a scaffolding firm and the West Midlands County Council’s Highways Department—accidents to highways road furniture sometimes demanded very sensitive dealings with folk who had suffered injury or personal loss.



*At the installation of the restored Sundial in Mary Steven’s Park, (l to r) Bryn Williams, Alan Cutler, John Sparry, John Farmer and David Humphries*

Humph also dedicated himself over many years to the discovery and reinstallation of the Sundial presented to Stourbridge by King Edward’s in celebration of the School’s Charter of 1552.

It was when managing departments of the West Midlands County Council’s Highway Authority—the offices were in an ancient building, David reckoned he had seen a ghost. Still, it was all part of the job.

A very courteous and kind man—he nursed his wife through her final illness—and above all, an enthusiast. It was a pleasure to have known David Humphries.

I still have a few copies of my first King Edward’s book available in which the article about David is included. and

have just brought out the third—which features stage and screen alumni. Each volume is £12.50 including P&P or £9.99 at Hayes Cycles, Wall Heath. Actual phone calls only, sorry, I can’t cope with texts or voice messages—or carrier pigeons, for that matter!



*An exterior shot of Tipton Gasworks from the scrapbook of David Humphries.*

**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!)*



# CHRISTMAS TRIVIA

**Just how much do you know about Christmas? We have gathered together some little-known facts that surprised us—and we hope will intrigue you too!**

The use of the shortened form of the word Christmas—Xmas—dates back to the 16th century. The ‘X’ comes from the Greek letter Chi which is at the start of the Greek word for Christ.

**The portrayal of Santa Clause as an old man with a white beard came from a cartoon (seen right) by Thomas Nast and featured in Harper’s Weekly in January 1881.**

Did you know that Christmas was once banned in the UK? In 1647 Parliament passed an ordinance that abolished Christmas Day and it lasted for 13 years between 1647 and 1660.

**The first person to dress up as Santa in a department store was James Edgar in 1890. He owned a store in Brocton, Mass. and decided to take the part of Santa himself.**

In Sweden it is a tradition to watch a Disney film entitled *From All Of Us To All Of You* on Christmas Eve. The film features Donald Duck.

**The most important family member should sit at the head of the table. This tradition comes from the days when families would share their meals with the servants. The head of the table was where the most important family member would sit. This tradition (strangely) has carried on and is actually still used in some British households.**

Santa’s suit was not always red—Coca Cola actually re-invented it for an ad campaign. St Nick had appeared in numerous illustrations and written descriptions previously wearing tan, green and even scarlet, but never the bright red we now all know and love!



**Yet another connection between Christmas and Coca Cola is that Santa’s friend, Sprite Boy inspired the drink ‘Sprite’. In 1942 Coca-Cola introduced “Sprite Boy” a character who appeared with Santa Clause in Coca-Cola advertising campaigns throughout the 1940s and 50s.**

Coal was given to naughty children for two reasons. Parents left coal for their naughty children because it killed two birds with one stone—it was designed to convince their child to be less naughty and could also be used for cooking food or heating homes during the cold winter months.

**During World War 1, soldiers stopped fighting at Christmas. British and German troops held a truce on Christmas Day. They stopped fighting, exchanged gifts and played games of football.**

The highest grossing Christmas movie is the *Grinch*. *Home Alone* was beaten by this animated hit.



**ROCK THE MISTLETOE** is a band of around 20 local artists who have got together to record a song entitled “*Christmas Time (Bells Chime)*”. The idea was the brainchild of Steve Taylor of Black Country Carpets in Stourbridge who got together with Alan Bell from Stage Studios in Halesowen, Ade Hill from the band Dr and the Medics, Gel Newey from Bleeding Hearts and Plutonium.

Alan was the initial creator of the song and with everyone’s help and a few studio sessions they turned it into the song it is today.

Steve hosts Retro Rock on Black Country Radio every Monday evening and through the show he met all the artists now involved in putting together the song. It was a case of getting together over a couple of weeks to record the vocals and instrumentals and then Alan went ahead and arranged for the song to be mixed.

The line-up boasts an impressive array of talent including Alan Bell and Mark David from Moosejaw, Russell Peake from Electus, Lisa and Tallukah Lilley from Showcall Academy of Performing Arts, James Barnes and Mike Conningby from Queen Reloaded, Ian Slater from Don’t Stop, Ian Hideous and Jay Decay from Decay 87, Jason Keely from Black Country Radio, Cy Wooldridge and Jess Skidmore (who Steve knew mainly from local theatre as well as performing with them in various bands such as Housewives Choice and Adam Husk from Labelled Ded). Alex Bell played keyboards with Sofia Whitehouse on vocals. Also on vocals were Mike Crountear from Queen Reloaded and Alan’s fellow band mate Mark Davies from Moosejaw

Everyone involved with this project has freely given their time and Alan has done all of the recording and offered his studios free of charge. The object is quite simply to raise as much money for children’s charities as they can via downloads and streams. CDs will also be available and a video (edited by Philippa Davies and assisted by Jess Skidmore) has been recorded which is now available to view on YouTube. The song is available to download on most major streaming apps and platforms.

The group are hoping that the song will become a future favourite and, fingers crossed, that it also makes the charts. All they need is enough interest and promotion which they are constantly striving to get—if there is anyone out there who has any ideas of further promotion the team are always willing to listen.



**If you would like further information or would like to speak about possible promotional aspects of the project please contact Steve Taylor at Black Country Carpets on 0795 898 2246**

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*A very Happy Christmas and a peaceful  
and prosperous New Year  
to all our Advertisers, Readers,  
Designers, Printers and Distributors.*

*Gail*

# BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

As water freezes at 32°F, the cricket ball would not reach the bottom of Barrel B!

As five lines are required the cost per mile is £2500, making the total cost £15,000 for the six miles.

The answer is **ONE WORD**

16 years, 12 years and 8 years.

The Wordbat was a bit more tricky. The answer is **UP TO NO GOOD**

So another year comes to an end. We are always on the lookout for new Brainteasers so be sure to look out for more coming your way in the January edition.

## COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **NOVEMBER** edition was **HISTORY** (which was misspelt). The two lucky winners who each receive a **£50 SHOPPING VOUCHER** are:

**MR H. HANS** of **WORDSLEY** and  
**APRIL MORGAN** of **SEDGLEY**

You can find this month's competition on page 42.

**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.



Wombourne & District Choral Society

# Christmas Oratorio

by Bob Chilcott

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Conducted by Edward Caine

Saturday 20th December 2025 at 7.30pm - Beckminster Methodist Church, Wolverhampton WV3 7BQ

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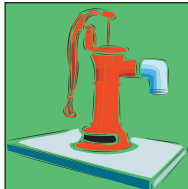
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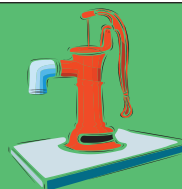


PRESTWOODCAVENURSERY



The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

# PARISH PUMP



## PENN 2 PAPER

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**Please contact the Library for further information of the next meeting.**

**Penn Library, Coalway Road  
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**THE NEXT PARISH PUMP  
WILL BE IN THE JANUARY 2026  
EDITION AND THE COPY  
DEADLINE IS Thursday, 18th  
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Don't forget that 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)

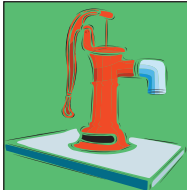
## KNOT KNIT & NATTER



are a friendly craft group who meet on the first and third Tuesdays of the month from 10.00am-12.00 noon in Kinver Community Library, Vicarage Drive, Kinver DY7 6HJ.

Why not pop along and receive encouragement with unfinished projects, try new skills, chat about ideas whilst having a cup of coffee.

There is no charge and it is a great way to make new friends.



# The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver PARISH PUMP



George was a captive bred barn owl I hand reared from a few days old. He lived in the house un-restrained together with Sandy our

Labrador dog and two cats. I needed an imprinted bird for lectures and also wanted to see how being reared in an alien environment affected his development and behaviour and what sort of relationships developed between them all (he did have an outside flight as well so we could eat in peace without a barn owl coming to investigate what we were eating!) The bird and the cats basically just avoided and generally ignored each other but he used to sit on Sandy's head and nibble at his ears. Fortunately, as Sandy was very laid back and quite used to strange creatures being brought in from time to time, there were never any problems or animosity between them. George was very nosy which used to get him into trouble sometimes. We didn't use fly sprays in our house but the old fashioned but very effective fly papers which we would remove whilst he was in the house. He once investigated a fly paper hanging from the ceiling which we had failed to take down and he spotted it within seconds of being brought in and perching on his favourite spot on top of the lounge door. As soon as he touched the very sticky fly paper, it stuck to his feathers with a vengeance resulting in him being trussed up in it, pulling the drawing pin out of the ceiling to land in an undignified sticky heap on the floor. It took over two hours with washing up liquid and water and then the hair drier to clean him up! He did enjoy the hair drier treatment though! N.B. Owls make terrible pets so don't even consider having one!

**Alan Peace, Himley Hall and  
Park Senior Warden 1985-2012**



## WARSTONES LIBRARY 37 Pinfold Grove, Warstones WV4 4PT



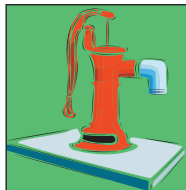
Warstones Library are offering Rhyme Time for children every Tuesday from 2.30-3.00pm

Why not pop along for rhymes, giggles and play. Fun, music and stories are provided by the Library for little ones under 5.

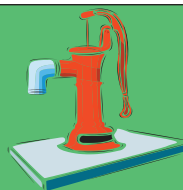
Rhyme Time is designed to teach toddlers early literacy skills in preparation for reading. On the agenda will be singing songs, reading books and making rhymes.

For more information why not pop in and see a member of staff at the Library or telephone 01902 556275 or email them at [libraries@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:libraries@wolverhampton.gov.uk)





# The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver PARISH PUMP



## BRA RECYCLING AT LOCAL LIBRARIES



Staffordshire Libraries in South Staffordshire are teaming up with Waste Savvy Staffs to expand a bra recycling scheme that also helps to support the 'Against Breast Cancer' Charity. Bra recycling banks are onsite at Codsall, Perton, Wombourne Library and Kinver Community Library. You can also find ink cartridge recycling points and battery boxes soon at Codsall, Perton and Wombourne to dispose of those unwanted ink cartridges and batteries. To find out more please contact your local library or search for Waste Savvy Staffs on Facebook.



## A VERY MERRY AUSTEN BIRTHDAY

**Penn Library**

*Tuesday, 16th December  
2.30pm-4.00pm*

*With Dr Lucy Andrew  
Hazel Meredith-Lloyd  
and Shaney Lloyd*

**Penn Library, Coalway Road, Penn,  
Wolverhampton**

## SEDGLEY MORNING TOWNSWOMENS GUILD

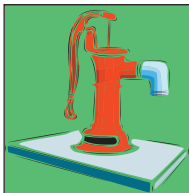
The Guild meet at 10.00am on the first Thursday of every month at  
**Beacon Centre for the Blind, Wolverhampton Road East WV4 6AZ.**

This is a friendly group whose aim is to provide interesting speakers, fun activities and day trips.

There is a lot coming up for the New Year so be sure to look out for the January Parish Pump when we will be able to pass on details of future speakers.

The Guild are always delighted to welcome new members and the first two visits are absolutely **FREE**. So why not give it a go and see if this is for you—it is the perfect way to meet different people and make new friends.





# The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver PARISH PUMP



## Kinver Rotary Club

has announced the routes for this year's Christmas sleigh tour, but stress that the entire programme can only be completed with the help of non-Rotarian volunteers willing to give an evening to assist with house-to-house collecting or a two-hour session on Saturdays at the Aldi stores in Wollaston and Kingswinford. The routes are as follows:



**Monday, 8th December: Kinver – Dark Lane & Dunsley**

**Tuesday, 9th December: Wollaston - Somerset Drive, Richmond Grove, Gerald Road**

**Wednesday, 10th December: Kinver – White Hill, Meddins Lane, Edge View Walk**

**Thursday, 11th December: Wall Heath – Millers Green Drive, Windmill Grove**

**Friday 12th December: Stourton/Kinver – Prestwood House, Stewponey, Stourton Crescent, Kinver High Street**

**Saturday, 13th December: Aldi - Kingswinford**

**Monday, 15th December: Wollaston – Richardson Drive, Doulton Brook, High Street**

**Tuesday, 16th December: Stourton/Wollaston – Hyperion Road, Ridgewood Avenue, Eggington Road**

**Wednesday, 17th December: Kinver/Envile – Hyde Lane (Kinver), Envile**

**Thursday, 18th December: Wollaston – Belfrey Drive, Wolverley Ave, Wollaston Court**

**Friday, 19th December: Kinver – Stone Lane, Church View Gardens**

**Saturday, 30th December: Aldi – Wollaston**

If you are able to help to bring joy to children (and parents) in the area while supporting local charities through the collections please contact Roy Sanders at [rasanders@btinternet.com](mailto:rasanders@btinternet.com)



## The OVER 60's CLUB

meet at **Swindon Community Centre, High Street,  
Swindon, Dudley DY3 4NR**  
on **Monday afternoons between 1.15pm and 4.15pm.**

If you are looking to meet new friends then why not consider popping along to join this friendly and fun loving group and enjoy tea, coffee, biscuits, bingo and a raffle.

For further information please contact Lorraine on **07855 200 736.**

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## PLEASE MENTION

## Village Voice

WHEN USING THE SERVICES OF OUR ADVERTISERS  
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- Sam's Exterior Cleaning Services
- The Shaggy Dog
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- Wombourne Tyres
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## Does Your Will do Enough to Protect your Loved Ones?

### Putting Family Assets First



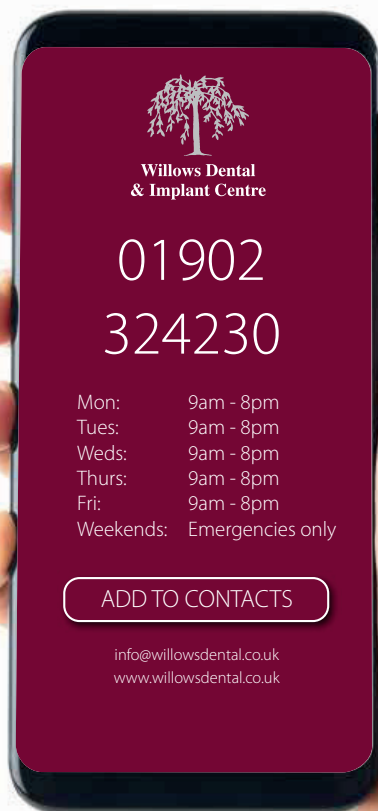
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