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Village Voice

Chris Smith - We Remember!

ISSUE 242 | JANUARY 2026

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Village Voice

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

Cover story



For Village Voice, 2025 was a great year and we are determined to make 2026 even better! There are exciting plans ahead for the magazines. Over the last six months we have begun venturing into new areas in which to deliver the magazines and this has generated a lot of interest. Don't worry, we are still going to all the places that we have in the past, but it never hurts to raise the bar a little.

We have also joined forces with a PR man! Sounds grand but it will be his job to ensure that the magazine is going in the right direction. Those that were acquainted with Chris will know that he was a PR man through and through and it is one of his ex-colleagues who will now be working alongside us. All that is left to say is 'watch this space'!

Gail



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34 We have another of our popular features – 'Do You Remember?'

38-39 It is usually after Christmas that we all go into 'decluttering' mode. One of our features this month is by Katherine Blackler of Sort My Space. We hope you enjoy reading it.

44 Our competition this month has been donated by one of our wonderful advertisers. He has donated 2 x £50.00 Dining Out vouchers. Don't forget to send in your entry.

48 An obligatory editorial at the end of any year is those who are no longer with us. The list seems to get longer every year.

52-53 We feature another list of speakers who are available to give talks.

56 Brainteasers answers and Competition Winners.

56 Win 2 x tickets to the Robin Club in Bilston.

58-61 The Parish Pump: Read about what is going on in your area.



**Please note that the closing date for our competition this month is
FRIDAY, 23rd JANUARY 2026. 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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COPY DEADLINE

Please note that the copy deadline for the **FEBRUARY 2026** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **THURSDAY, 22nd JANUARY 2026**. Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.

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it's a fact!

- ★ In the mid 19th century the first passenger service long the canal between Wolverhampton and Birmingham via Coseley began. It was operated by Thomas Monk using the steam-packet '*Euphrates*'. The Coseley-Birmingham journey took 2½ hours.
- ★ In September 1833 the congregation at St James' Church in Gornal had to flee half way through a service when plaster from the ceiling near the tower came crashing down on their heads. There was a howling gale blowing at the time and it was thought that the tower was in imminent danger of collapse. A subsequent inspection of the tower did show that whilst it was in a very poor state of repair there was no immediate cause for concern.
- ★ In 1923 Coseley Education Committee started a centralised 'Boot Fund' to ensure that all children had suitable footwear for the winter. Although some schools already had set up similar funds it was decided that a centralised fund would be more appropriate. Within weeks subscriptions had amounted to £78/1s/1d and boots for 211 children had been ordered. "Up the hill" at Sedgley the local police had set up a similar fund and they were busy raising funds through whist drives, dances, concerts and street collections. By mid 1923 they had distributed over 400 pairs of best quality boots.
- ★ In August 1901 Thomas Marsh, a poultry dealer from Upper Gornal, was fined £2 at Bridgnorth for aiding and abetting the staging of a cock fight. A ring had been formed in a field and three battles were fought with two of the cocks killed. The main organisers were not, however, apprehended.

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BRAINTEASERS

We are starting off 2026 with a mixture of puzzles, all of which are on the easy side (so no excuses!). If, however, they do get the better of you, then the answers can be found on page 56.

1. Which of the four statements below are correct and which are false. No catches...but be careful!

- A. The number of false statements in this box is one.
- B. The number of false statements in this box is two.
- C. The number of false statements in this box is three.
- D. The number of false statements in this box is four.

2. A man walked into a bar, put £1 on the counter and asked for half of lager. The barmaid asked him if he wanted Kronenbourg or Fosters. He

asked for Kronenbourg. A little later another man (who was a stranger) came in, put £1 on the counter and asked for a half pint of lager. She immediately pulled him half a pint of Kronenbourg. Why didn't she offer him a choice?

- 3. What is the next letter in the sequence?

O T T F F S ?

4. Dave ran halfway into the forest in half an hour. Steve claimed that he could have gone three-quarters of the way into the forest in the same time. Dave, however, said that this was impossible. Why?

A slightly more difficult one now:

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A NEW YEAR..OR IS IT?

Historically, New Year combines both pagan and religious beliefs and is the oldest celebration regularly undertaken by most of the world's population. However, that celebration does not always take place on 1st January with over half of the world celebrating on various other dates.

The first New Year celebrations came from the Babylonians about 4000 years ago when they celebrated the re-birth of the land at the beginning of Spring. The significance of 1st January was set by the Romans in 153 BC although it would seem that the date chosen was purely arbitrary. Despite the fact that this was a pagan festival the Christian church accepted this date as being a time to celebrate the start of a New Year and throughout the Western world this became the norm. However, other religions celebrate it on a very different dates.

Much of the Eastern Orthodox Church, for example, celebrates the New Year on 14th January when it also celebrates the circumcision of the infant Jesus. For members of the Coptic Orthodox Church the significant date is much later on in the year—11th September to be precise—when they celebrate Neyrouz. The Hebrew new Year (Rosh Hashanah) occurs any time between 6th September and 5th October with it falling on Saturday, 12th September this year.

The Chinese will celebrate the start of the Year of the Horse on 17th February whilst the Bengali New Year (Pohela Baisakh) is celebrated on Wednesday, 15th April.

The Islamic New Year commences on 17th June. Because the Muslim calendar is based on a 354 day lunar year the dates move forward about 11 days each year.

However, one of the most fascinating celebrations is in Sri Lanka where the Sinhala and Tamil New Year fall on Tuesday, 14th April. The actual end of the old year is determined by the state astrologer who also says when the New Year (Aluth Avurudhu) should commence. The two are not necessarily immediately after each other and the period between the two is known as Nona Gathe (the neutral period) when normal work is abandoned in favour of religious devotion.

Finally, of course, New Year would not be the same without resolutions being made. Even the Babylonians 4000 years ago are reported to have made promises to be better at various things—the most common resolution being to return borrowed farm equipment!

A recent survey showed that in the UK the five most popular resolutions are to lose weight, to quit smoking, to get out of debt, to get fit and to spend more time with the family. Unfortunately the same survey also showed that most people were only repeating the same resolution from the previous year as they had broken it within ten days of the New Year starting. Perhaps the most appropriate resolution is to stop making New Year's resolutions!

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VENICE OF THE BLACK COUNTRY?

In a long article about Tipton in the Birmingham Daily Gazette in July 1868 local author J.C. Tildesley gave a fascinating insight into the town of Tipton in the mid 19th century. It seems that he was the very first person to refer to it (at least in writing) as “*the Venice of the Black Country*”.

The reason he gives for making such a remark was “*You cannot enter the town from any point of the compass without crossing a main channel, an arm or a basin*”. He then continued with that analogy by suggesting that “*King Coal has been the Doge of Tipton for many a long year*.”

Whilst he waxes lyrical about the similarities between the two places he then switches to matters of the mind and, in particular John Wesley whose religious fervour was clear to see. Tildesley interviewed a 90 year old woman—Mrs Paskin—who remembers being taken by her brother to hear Wesley preach. She described him as “*a stiff little man with a white wig and dressed in gaiters and black silk stockings*”. She said that he arrived on a brown horse and immediately addressed the crowd “*charming the worshippers to silence and before his sermon was ended many broke out into joyous smiling and repentant tears*.” Tildesley concludes by saying “*There is no equal to the Black Country, in Italy or anywhere else*.”



John Wesley who preached in and around Tipton on several occasions.

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it's a fact!

- ★ In the 1920s and early 1930s the Red Lion Inn in Castle Street, Coseley was owned by brothers Henry and Benjamin Woodhouse who also ran the very successful Alma Brewery in Dudley. In total they owned some 15 pubs around the area as well as brewing for a number of other outlets.
- ★ In the 17th century it was usual for the sovereign to offer knighthoods to various people in each district. These offers, however, were very much a double-edged sword. To accept the offer would cost between £60 and £70 and bring with it a number of (unpaid) responsibilities. If the knighthood was refused though, a fine of £10 was levied. Local men who preferred to pay the fine included Alexander Wightwick of Wightwick, Thomas Dolman of Seisdon and Edward Hall of Sedgley.
- ★ During the English Civil War it was held that marriage was merely a civil contract between the parties without any religious significance. Such ceremonies were usually conducted by local magistrates and Sedgley parish records show that between 1653 and 1657 many marriages were conducted by a Justice Stone who also presided in criminal courts held in Wolverhampton, Sedgley, Seisdon and Kingswinford.
- ★ In October 1874 Mary Marsh of Dudley appeared in court accused of having been drunk in public. Unfortunately when she turned up for her case to be heard she was clearly drunk and was therefore locked up until she was sober. As she had been convicted of five similar offences during the previous 12 months the magistrates took a serious view of the charges and fined her 21 shillings plus costs for each offence (the original one and a second one for appearing in court whilst drunk).

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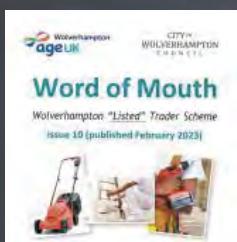
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DID YOU KNOW?

The origin of the term 'Black Country' provides historians with something of a dilemma. Whilst the Oxford English Dictionary identifies its first use as being in a book written by J.C. Young and published in 1834 that reference is used merely as a description and, according to the OED the first time that the term was actually attached to a specific area was in an article in the 'Daily Telegraph' in December 1864. There are, however, at least two published sources of the term that pre-dates this—the earliest being a book called '*All Round The Wrekin*' by Walter White which was published in 1860.

Certainly at this time the region deserved such an epithet with over 440 collieries, almost 200 blast furnaces and more than 110 ironworks within a five mile radius of Dudley Castle.



It is said that at night the fires from the furnaces and forges could be seen from many miles away and

that by day a black cloud of smoke hung over the area. Indeed, so bad was the pollution that legend has it that for over nine months Dudley Castle could not be seen from the bottom of Castle Hill.



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it's a fact!

★ July 1863 saw the worst suspicions of the Highway Board of Sedgley confirmed when it became clear that the collector in the Brierley area of Coseley had embezzled a substantial amount of money from the public purse. After a thorough investigation it was determined that Moses Hughes, the collector, had appropriated virtually all the money due for the highways over a nine year period. However, when the parish constable was sent to apprehend him it was found that he had sold up and moved to Australia.

★ In 1939, John James Benton, the licensee of the Courthouse pub in Sedgley, found himself in trouble with the law when he was fined £25 and disqualified from driving for being drunk in charge of a motor vehicle. At Audnam in Wordsley he drove into the back of a lorry reversing out of a garage onto the main road. He had ignored signals given by a man guiding the lorry driver saying that he "*thought he was waving at me, not telling me to stop*". *A police constable called to the scene of the accident described Benton as seeming "very peculiar. He had his hands in his pockets in a half soaked way and did some blinking and nodding of his head"*

★ In the Dudley Herald of 15 February 1890 Samuel Timmins advertised something of a coup for his business. He negotiated with Samuel Salt of Kates Hill Brewery for them to supply Timmins' pub, the *Cape of Good Hope* in Tipton with their ales. The brewery had an excellent reputation for its beers and demand was far outstripping supply. As a result many pubs that wanted to offer the beer to their customers were unable to get supplies. Timmins therefore thought there was benefit in this and therefore widely advertised its availability.



JANUARY AT THE ROBIN



SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY

SATURDAY 3RD JANUARY
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FRIDAY 9TH JANUARY
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SATURDAY 10TH JANUARY
MALINA MOYE & DANIELLE NICOLE

SUNDAY 11TH JANUARY
ROD STUART
TRIBUTE TO ROD STEWART

THURSDAY 15TH JANUARY
DEFINITELY GREENDAY
TRIBUTE TO GREENDAY

FRIDAY 16TH JANUARY
GUNS 2 ROSES
TRIBUTE TO GUNS N ROSES

SATURDAY 17TH JANUARY
A FOREIGNERS JOURNEY
TRIBUTE TO FOREIGNER AND JOURNEY

SUNDAY 18TH JANUARY
FOREVER BILLY JOEL
TRIBUTE TO BILLY JOEL

THURSDAY 22ND JANUARY
FONTAINES Y.C
TRIBUTE TO FONTAINES D.C

FRIDAY 23RD JANUARY
SOUNDS OF SEATTLE
TRIBUTE TO GRUNGE

SATURDAY 24TH JANUARY
JEAN GENIE
TRIBUTE TO DAVID BOWIE

SUNDAY 25TH JANUARY
HEARTBREAK - THE TOM PETTY SHOW
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SATURDAY 31ST JANUARY
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INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT....JANUARY

1569—11th: The first state lottery was held in England, with tickets on sale at the West Door of St Paul's Cathedral in London.

1622—1st: The Catholic Church adopted 1 January as the beginning of the New Year (instead of 25 March).

1807—28th: London became the first city in the world to be lit by gas lights.

1818—5th: The first regular trans-Atlantic shipping service began between Liverpool and New York.

1846—21st: The first edition of the Daily News, edited by Charles Dickens was published in London.

1912—17th: Britain's polar explorers, led by Captain Robert Falcon Scott reached the South Pole—only to find the Norwegian Roald Amundsen's expedition had beaten him by a month.

1915—19th: German Zeppelin airships crossed the eastern coast of England to bombard towns in East Anglia, more than 20 people were killed.

1967—4th: Death of Donald Campbell. His jet-powered speedboat Bluebird somersaulted on Coniston Water, Cumbria, at a speed of 300mph whilst attempting to break his own world record of 276mph.

1970—12th: The first Boeing 747 Jumbo jet arrived at London's Heathrow Airport after completing its maiden transatlantic flight from New York.

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SHOESTRING Starring Trevor Eve, this was the story of how unemployed computer expert Eddie Shoestring becomes a private eye after appearing on a radio station. Listeners ring in to his show (called “*The Private Ear of Eddie Shoestring*”) and he takes up cases on their behalf. A total of 21 episodes were recorded in 1978 and 1980 with the last being a Christmas special starring Toyah Wilcox. After the second series Trevor Eve decided not to continue in the role and so the BBC commissioned a brand new series based on Jersey called Bergerac starring John Nettles. But do you remember the name of the fictional radio station on which Shoestring appeared?

SALE OF THE CENTURY From October 1971 until November 1983 “*the quiz of the week*” was one of the highlights of family viewing, not only in the UK but also many other countries throughout the world including Paraguay, India and Nigeria. The host in the UK was Nicholas Parson whilst it was aired on ITV but then it moved first to Sky (with Peter Marshall) and then Challenge TV (with Keith Chegwin). Our question, though, is about the Series when it was on ITV. In which city was it recorded?



WHEELTAPPERS & SHUNTERES SOCIAL CLUB

WHEELTAPPERS & SHUNTERES SOCIAL CLUB was set in a fictional northern Working Men’s Club. This series ran from 1973 until 1977. Stars to have appeared in it included Alvin Stardust, The Three Degrees, The Krankies, Nana Mouskouri and Bill Haley & The Comets. Colin Crompton (seen here) was the Chairman and Bernard Manning was the compere. But who can remember the name of the waitress who went on to star in Coronation Street?

THE SECRET DIARY OF ADRIAN MOLE

AGED 13% Based on the Sue Townsend’s book of the same title, this TV adaptation was first aired in 1985 and starred Gian Sammarco as Adrian, Stephen Moore as his father, Julie Walters as his mother and Beryl Reid as his grandmother. Bert Baxter was played by Bill Fraser. It told of the unrequited love that Adrian had for Pandora (played by Lindsey Stagg).

The show ran for six episodes but was so successful that a second series (entitled “*The Growing Pains of Adrian Mole*”) was broadcast in 1987. In this second series Adrian’s mother was played by another actress better known as a singer—who was she?:



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it's a fact!

★ In November 1901 a double inquest was held into the deaths of sisters Elizabeth (a schoolteacher) and Winifred (a factory worker) Frost of Tipton. The two young women were out selling tickets for a Unionist tea party but whilst going home in thick fog they apparently fell into the canal and drowned. A verdict of accidental death was returned on both.

★ In September 1918 Lottie Sheldon of Princes End was in court in Smethwick accused of travelling on the London & North Western Railway without having paid her fare and also giving a false name and address to a railway official. It seemed that she travelled from Tipton to Smethwick without a ticket and when asked to produce one she said that she had got on at Spon Lane and offered to pay from there. It was also clear that she gave a false name and address. The prosecutor asked that Sheldon be heavily punished as it was obvious that other munitions workers—like Sheldon—were also defrauding the railway company in the same way. Sheldon was fined 15/-.

★ News reached the local papers that on the evening of Wednesday 17th January 1798 that a Mr T Evans of Coseley was stopped by two men near Sedgley who then robbed him of a £50 note that he was carrying. He told the police that his attackers had passed him twice on the road and then he saw one lying under a hedge as he crossed a field. As he slowed down to see what had happened the other man leapt upon him and pressed a pistol to his chest, demanding that he hand over his valuables. Immediately after this robbery a substantial reward was offered for the detention of the robbers but no information was forthcoming and the crime was never solved.

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Creating an Intentional Life for 2026

How Simplifying and Decluttering Your Life Can Make You Happier

In a world that encourages us to upgrade, accumulate and say yes to everything, more people are discovering the powerful emotional and psychological benefits of owning less and creating intentional spaces.

For the past 10 years, **Katherine Blackler**, Certified Professional Organizer (CPO®) and founder of SortMySpace Ltd has helped individuals transform overwhelmed homes and workplaces into more supportive, calming environments.

The Invisible Weight of “Too Much”

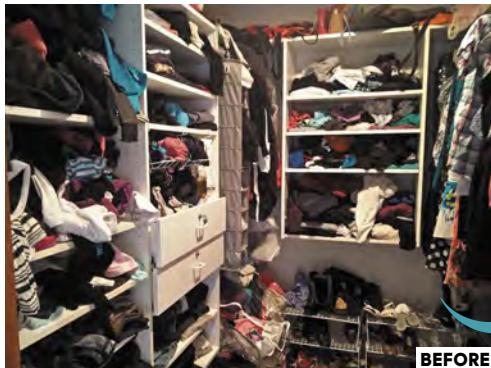
Clutter usually enters our lives quietly, a special-offer purchase here, a sentimental item there, a box we never quite get around to sorting.

“People underestimate the invisible weight that unnecessary belongings carry,” Katherine told us. “Every item you own needs storage, cleaning, maintaining, or replacing. Reducing what surrounds you, also decreases the number of demands placed on your brain, time and energy.”

Simplifying, she explains, isn’t about stark minimalism or living in a characterless ‘show home’. It’s about finding your unique ‘sweet spot’ as to the volume of things you want and need around you. An intentional space reflects the life you’re actually living now, not the one you used to live, or one that you feel obligated to maintain.



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Stepping Away from Social Media Pressure

"So many people try to replicate what they see online," she said. "But Instagram-ready perfection isn't real life, it's a heavily curated version of life. Often the content creators don't sustain what you see in their images either".

She encourages clients to unfollow accounts that evoke comparison or pressure. This makes it easier to recognise what genuinely brings us joy (not what we feel we *ought* to want).

Reclaiming Space, And Emotional Freedom

When you let go of what no longer serves you, you gain room, physically and mentally, for what truly matters. Simplifying your life doesn't require sweeping changes or perfectly labelled boxes. Katherine encourages starting small: one drawer, one shelf, one habit. Momentum builds slowly. She also cautions that "New behaviours or processes can take time to adjust to so be gentle with yourself if you fall back into old ways."

In a culture that celebrates consumption and busyness, simplifying is more than a lifestyle choice; it's an act of self-care. Decluttering can offer a path to a happier, more intentional life, one clear surface and one conscious choice at a time.



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In 1855 seven Sedgley men died after a coal mine in Gornal collapsed. A total of 47 dependents were left.

An investigation showed that the disaster was caused by insufficient timber supports being placed along the shafts. The colliers had apparently complained about the situation, only to be told by the Earl of Dudley's overseer that he had been acting on orders "from higher up" in reducing the number of pit props. This revelation caused a considerable uproar locally and led to the Earl eventually giving each of the seven widows a guinea in compensation. Whilst this was gratefully accepted by the widows the controversy did not end there. The following Sunday the parson at Himley Church preached a sermon based on "The Good Samaritan" praising the Earl's generosity. This caused much annoyance amongst many of the local colliers who felt that the accident was caused by the



demands of the Earl for greater profitability from the mine. Demands were made for the person to be dismissed and some local shops even refused to serve him and his family.

Eventually, to diffuse the situation the Earl announced that an independent safety survey of all his mines would be undertaken.

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MONSTER FROM THE DEEP

Gornal readers may well recognise a very young Arthur Hale in this picture taken in February 1967. Sadly Arthur is no longer with us but his memory lives on with stories such as this. Although perhaps best known as a very useful cricketer (he once took all 10 wickets in an innings whilst playing for Himley Cricket Club) he was also something of a dab hand at angling. He is seen here with a pike that he caught at Forden in Montgomeryshire which tipped the scales at 21½ lbs. It was 40" long and had a girth of 19". His monster catch was kept in the bath for a few days until he could arrange for it to be preserved and indeed for many years it was on display in a glass case in his living room, until he was persuaded to give it away.



A proud Arthur Hale with his 'Monster from the deep'.

Whilst it is certainly a fine fish it comes nowhere near the British record which is currently held by Lloyd Watson in respect of a fish caught at a weight of 47lb 5oz, caught on 13 February 2024 at Chew Valley Lake.



We all know that after the expense of Christmas budgets are always at full stretch. We have been "gifted" by one of our lovely advertisers, 2 x £50.00 'Dining Out' gift cards which we are now offering to two lucky winners. The card can be redeemed at a selection of restaurants. But remember...you need to get your entry in before the closing date.

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 (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, 23rd January 2026**. Good luck!

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GONE...BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

2025 has seen the death of a number of well known and respected entertainers across television, films, music and more. The list seems endless but here are just a few:

Actor **Robert Redford**; actress **Diane Keaton**; Cosby Show star **Malcolm Jamal Warner**; Black Sabbath frontman **Ozzy Osbourne**; Twin Peaks co-creator **David Lynch**; Oscar winner **Gene Hackman**; Gossip Girl star **Michelle Trachtenberg**; Buck Rogers star **Gil Gerard**; and popular author **Sophie Kinsella** (of '*Confessions of a Shopaholic*' fame).

There was also legendary playwright and screenwriter **Tom Stoppard**; Reggae pioneer **Jimmy Cliff**; and the always amusing and highly talented drummer **Jellybean Johnson**. He originally drummed for Flyte Tyme from which Prince later recruited members for his new funk-pop group the Time—the band released three albums in the 80s for Prince on multiple tours in the early 80s and also appeared in his 1984 film, *Purple Rain*.

Prunella Scales, an actress who became a household name playing the long-suffering Sybil Fawlty (*Fawlty Towers*) alongside John Cleese; **John Lodge**, singer and bassist for The Moody Blues who he joined in 1966.

RIP one and all.

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DRINKS: In the Spirit—Abingdon Distillery

A review by Trevor Langley



The Abingdon Distillery (Est. 2018) is located at Abingdon-on-Thames and has won numerous awards for their exceptional productions of spirits. The copper stills, which are utilised to a great advantage, were handmade in Portugal. No artificial colours, concentrates or flavourings are included in the production processes of the small batch delectations. The botanicals and casks used are from worldwide origins. The bottles are 100% recyclable and packaging is free of plastic, as the company is committed and dedicated to reducing their carbon footprint and the distillery has now become part of a global sustainability programme.

Abingdon London Dry Gin (40% vol) utilises eight botanicals in its make-up, to bring this hugely popular gin to fruition. Juniper forward, plus citrus and sweet spices are amongst the inclusions for this production. I found this gin to be outstanding, from the enticing bouquet, through the mouth's pleasure, for flavour and taste, to the palate's delight, which appreciates the long, extended finish. Perfect with an Indian tonic water and garnish.



Wild Oxon Rum (40% vol) from the Abingdon Distillery is a premium spiced rum production that has many devotees. White rum is fermented from cane sugar and the process which follows involves



maceration with orange peel, plus toasted coconut chips, nutmeg, ginger and other spices, to produce this excellent pleaser. Nasal senses, taste buds, and palate are all 'tuned in' to this grand production. Great for cocktails or for adding a mixer to.

Other spirits include several Gins, Pure White Rum, Chocolate Rum and more. Tastings, tours, private events, occasions and corporate functions can also be booked. The Rum Blending Experiences and Whisky Master Classes have become a welcome 'surprise gift' for loved ones, or someone special – plus connoisseurs too. The Discovery Club and the Founders Club offer exclusive benefits and have also grown in popularity. Corporate gifting, with customised labels, plus bespoke productions, can be developed and launched. Gift boxes and gift vouchers are also available. Their very informative website has all details and information, including stockists.

Online ordering is available and easy.

Abingdon Distillery, Coxeter House, 21 – 27 Ock Street, Abingdon, Oxfordshire OX14 5AJ. E-mail: hello@abingdondistillery.com Web: www.abingdondistillery.com



As always,

Enjoy!

Trevor Langley

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ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A SPEAKER?

One question that I am frequently asked is whether I can supply the names of speakers—granted there are a lot of names available via the internet but what if you are not well versed in computers? Periodically, therefore, we like to publish the names and details of a selection of local speakers. If you are a speaker and would like to be included free of charge in a future feature, then please email your details together with a current photograph to Gail at villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk

JOHN HOMER - A BLACK COUNTRY BLOKE!

For many years John has been involved with West Bromwich Albion, the Albion Foundation and the Black Country Living Museum, and is also a founder-member of the 'ME, MYSELF AND I' group which is a dementia support group for carers.

He is a speaker on everything and anything to do with the Black Country and local football.

His talks are a "pot-pourri" of stories, anecdotes, jokes, poetry and songs about the Black Country and life in general!

For further details of talks available please contact John either by:

Telephone: 01384 236827

Mobile: 07818 291578

Email: johnhomerwba@hotmail.co.uk

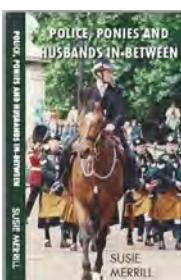


SUSIE MERRILL

Are you looking for a speaker?

'From One Pig to Another'

A collection of lively stories from Susie Merrill about her days as one of the first mounted police women in London's Metropolitan Police. All delivered with a characteristic wicked sense of humour. On retirement she moved to the West Midlands to marry Richard and become a smallholder keeping rare breed pigs on Kinver Edge in South Staffordshire.



Many of her experiences are recorded in her autobiography: *'Police, Ponies and Husbands in-between'*.

Susie Merrill can be contacted on 07831 487648



Ian M. Bott is a well known Wednesbury antiquarian who is known for his love of the 'macabre side of history'. There are many talks available via Ian including:

'Black Country Murders'—true tales of gruesome murders.

'Lost Mansions of the Black Country' stories about the many great houses that were once a feature of the area.

'The Midlands Zeppelin Outrage'—1916 when a squadron of zeppelins were sent to bomb Liverpool but instead bombed Midlands industrial towns.

For a full list of talks and availability please contact Ian on 0121 556 8877.

TERRY CHURCH

has been speaking to various groups and societies for well over 20 years during which time he has given a total of over 300 talks.



He offers a range of talks including:

'Village Memories' - reminiscences of growing up in a village on the edge of the Black Country in the 1950s.

'1942 A Vintage Year'—a look at how life has changed in the last 70 years.

'You couldn't make it up'—a light hearted look at stories that made the news.

'Lost but not forgotten'—nostalgic reflections of Terry's life at school, work and play.

'Radio and Television in the 1950's and 60's'—entertainment as we knew it.

'Autograph Collecting'—the history of the signature and 60 years of collecting them.

'57 Black Country Sportsmen'—sportsmen who have made the Black Country proud. This is also the title of Terry's book published in July 2015 (a further volume was published in September 2017).

Terry can be contacted at:

**6 Wharfedale Close, Wall Heath,
Kingswinford, West Midlands DY6 9AZ**

Telephone: 01384 292170

Mobile: 07974 428261

Email: terrychurch6@gmail.com

Max Keen is a retired teacher and speaking is his profession and being an avid historian he does so with the utmost of enthusiasm. There are 14 talks to choose from—here is a small selection:



'Sir Francis Drake: England's Greatest Naval Hero?'

'King John: The Worst or Most Useful King?'

'Pirates! The Fact and the Fiction'

'Hereward the Wake: The Last True Englishman?'

'Sir William Marshall: England's Greatest Knight?'

'The History of Dudley Castle 1071-1933'

Each talk features a multimedia projection and full period costume...including armour for the Henry V and Richard III talks.

Max can be contacted in a variety of ways:

Mobile: 07985 747261

Home: 01299 879841

Email: max55@uwclub.net

Website: www.keenhistorytalks.com

Or follow him on Facebook at

<https://www.facebook.com/keenhistorytalks>

KAREN EVANS

After completing a History degree Karen taught in primary schools before retiring in 2015. She then wrote two 'Grim Almanac' books for the History Press and she is currently writing for Family Tree Magazine on all things genealogical. Her love and enthusiasm for history was the impetus for her talks be it Regency dancing or using DNA in her own research. Karen's talks include:

'The Ultimate Black Sheep'—this uncovers an 1823 murder in her family which sent her on a thrilling and fascinating journey of discovery.



'Where does my family come from?' Unlocking the secrets of DNA testing—this talk covers areas such as understanding how the test works in very general terms.

'Dancing in the time of Jane Austen' - every savage can dance according to Mr Darcy but what would he have seen in the ballrooms of the day?

For a full list of talks available and availability please contact Karen on 07462 801829 or email her at karenevansdna@gmail.com

31st January 1916: THE NIGHT THE ZEPPELINS BOMBED TIPTON



The Greensill house in Union Street, Tipton after a bomb from a zeppelin had exploded killing three generations of the same family.

George Onions (12) and Frederick Yates (9) as well as local estate agent Thomas Church and shoemaker Arthur Edwards.

Also killed were Benjamin Goldie, Elizabeth Cartwright, Annie Wilkinson, Daniel Whitehouse and Louisa York. Two others who died were William and Maud Fellows. Although not related they were planning to get engaged and were walking along the canal towpath in Bradley when a

high explosive bomb exploded just in front of them. William was killed outright and Maud was to die a few days later in hospital. The photograph (above right) shows a scene from the canal in Tipton. The building on the extreme right is the Globe Inn which had all its windows blown out. Today of course there is no sign of the canal (it was filled in several decades ago).

A second Zeppelin—L19—came over Tipton about 12.20am on 1st February, attracted no doubt by the fires caused by the initial attack. Several bombs were dropped along Park Lane causing substantial damage to a number of buildings (including destroying the Bush Inn where the licensee and his family

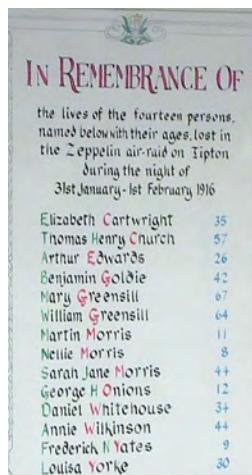
On the night of 31st January 1916 two Zeppelin airships – L19 and L21—set out to bomb Liverpool but lost their way and ended up in the West Midlands.

Commanded by Max Dietrich, L21 unleashed a series of high explosive and incendiary bombs on both Waterloo and Union Streets in Tipton causing a considerable amount of damage and a number of casualties, before then dropping bombs along the nearby railway line and into Bradley. This was the first time that German airships had attacked the Black Country and there was a great deal of outrage, especially when it was revealed that three generations of the same family had perished in the bombing.

Whilst her husband Thomas Morris went to the cinema in Owen Street, his wife Sarah Jane took two of their children Nellie (8) and Martin (11) to visit her parents William and Mary Greensill at their home at 8 Union Street. When the bombs fell Thomas rushed back from the cinema only to find that his in-laws' house had been destroyed and they, his wife and two children lay dead in the rubble. Others who were killed included youngsters



had a narrow escape) but, fortunately, there were no further casualties. A final bomb was dropped on the canal bank close to the junction of Union Street and Factory Street although again no injuries were reported. From here L19 travelled to Walsall where it caused havoc, dropping a number of high explosive and incendiary devices on the town centre before then departing back across country towards the Channel and home.



Unfortunately for Loewe and his crew the airship suffered engine trouble and was then hit by anti-aircraft fire in Holland. With three of its four engines disabled L19 floated back over the North Sea where it finally ditched in the water. The crew were seen by a British trawler but the captain refused to pick up the stranded Germans and they perished at sea. This episode drew a great deal of condemnation of the actions of the trawler's captain. In memory of the victims of the Zeppelin raid Tipton Civic Society organised for a distinctive Blue Plaque (seen right) to be affixed to the wall of H.C. Pullinger & Son (now occupied by Shear Elegance). The building stands on the site of the Globe Inn which was one of those buildings that suffered substantial damage in the raid. In addition, the Society also arranged for a memorial Roll of Honour (above left) to be displayed in Tipton Library alongside the existing commemorative boards to those soldiers who lost their lives in the First World War.



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BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

1. The answer to this is very simple. The only statement that can be correct is C.
2. Kronenberg was 90p a half pint and Fosters was £1.00. The first man put down a £1 coin and so he could have wanted either brand. The second man put down a 50p, two 20p pieces and a 10p piece—so he obviously wanted the £1 drink (Fosters).
3. The next letter in the sequence is 'S'. They are all the initial letters of numbers—One, Two, Three etc.
4. This is all a question of word semantics. You can only run half-way into a wood—after that you are running out of it!
5. It's easy if you say what you see! The answer is A STEP BACKWARDS.

COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **DECEMBER** edition was **FAMILY** which was mispelt. The two lucky winners who each receive a **FAMILY PASS** to the **ODEON CINEMA, MERRY HILL, DUDLEY** are:

MRS CAROL CURRIEN of **SEDGLEY** and
NORMA HURST of **SEDGLEY**

You can find this month's competition on page 44.

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.

WIN
TWO
TICKETS TO



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 or write to us at **The Robin Tickets, Forge House, 50 Redhall Road, Dudley DY3 2NL**. The lucky winner will be drawn on **Thursday, 22nd January 2026** – **GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **KEVIN PHILLIPS** of **LOWER GORNAL** who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **DECEMBER 2025** edition.

OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

“Thinks, thanks to Horlicks!”

On the 257, heading for another day at the desk—or even worse, dithering on the Amblecote sports field—what were those adverts along the bus interior? Oh, clever, that! ‘OOZ

GOING TO THE ZOO?’ Dudley, of course. But what was ‘208 Metres’? Luxembourg? Wireless! Better try that particularly when Dick Barton had gone from the BBC. Ah, but wait a jiff—Noel Johnson, the first of 3 Bartons, was on Luxembourg as Dan Dare! Sponsored by HORLICKS, remembers friend, Dave.

Courtesy of a gift of a complimentary ticket I went to the Civic Hall, Wolverhampton, to see the excellent Ken Mackintosh and his Orchestra making two recordings for broadcasting on Radio Luxembourg.

The legendary Geoffrey Everitt introduced the shows—no doubt improving the purchase of LYONS RED LABEL TEA no end.

Interestingly, although I was not to know it then, saxophonist Ken’s trombone section probably included Stourbridge’s Bobby Johnson, and also Gordon Langhorne, who as Don Lang and his Frantic Five

Photo by Graham Beckley of a family heirloom.

later recorded TV’s ‘Six Five Special’ theme.

It is possible that by many a fireside there are folk who can still spell Bristol’s Keynsham, after hearing, night after night, the rather plodding voice of Mr Horace Batchelor advising us to try his Infra-Draw Method of football pool selection. His style became an institution—just like ‘RADIO LUXEMBOURG, 208 METRES, MEDIUM WAVE—The Station of the Stars.



The hugely popular Gene Crowley, famous for ‘Music in the Morning’ on pre-War Radio Luxembourg also sponsored by Horlicks.

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!)



The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



DUDLEY PROBUS CLUB

lunch meetings are held on the **2nd Thursday** in the month starting at 12.30pm and are held at **The Lodge, Wellington Road, Dudley DY1 1RD.**

Coming up...

12 February—**Alex Hunt,**
Artisan Cheesemonger

12 March—**Colin Knipe** ‘Teddy Gray’s—
A Dudley Institution’

9 April—**Mark McLaughlin** ‘For God & Country: History of a Dudley Mission Church’

14 May—**Kate Davies** from Dudley Trading Standards talks about ‘Preventing Scams’

11 June—**Jack Williams**—‘Animal Conservation at Dudley Zoo’

9 July—Bingo Session with caller **Anne Jennings**

13 August—Annual Club Quiz with quizmaster **Allen Round**

10 September—Annual General Meeting

8 October and 12 November—speakers to be advised

10 December—Christmas Social with entertainment.

Further details can be obtained by emailing
dudleyprobus@gmail.com
or by visiting the Dudley Probus website.



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The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



SEDGLEY LOCAL HISTORY Society

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 12TH FEBRUARY – 7:30pm

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

THURSDAY 12TH 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!

THURSDAY 14TH MAY – 7:30 pm

Annual General Meeting followed by **Early Years at Soho:** Mary Bodfish celebrates industrialist Matthew Boulton and his famous Smethwick works culminating in the historic partnership with engineer/inventor James Watt.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME
Individual talks—£2.00

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IT'S WRITE HERE

It's Write Here is a writing group who meet at **Coseley Library**, Castle Street, Coseley WV14 9DW on the **4th Thursday of every month at 11.00am-1.00pm**.

Pens and paper are provided and there is complimentary tea and coffee organised by the Library.

If you are interested in creative writing, expression or discussion of books, individual and collaborative works and ideas then we would love to have you join our group.

For further information please telephone the Library on **01384 812775** or email them at **coseley.library@gll.org**

THE NEXT PARISH PUMP WILL BE IN THE FEBRUARY 2026 EDITION AND THE COPY DEADLINE IS Thursday, 22nd January 2026.

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**

The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP

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 in 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.

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

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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...

JANUARY

15th—Easter Island by speaker **Caroline Page**
22nd—Post Christmas Lunch at the Lodge
29th—The Golden Age of Radio by speaker **Roger Browne**

FEBRUARY

5th—1000 Kilometer Stroll, South East Coastal Path by speaker **Alan Peace**
12th—China—Land of Pandas and Dragons by speaker **Ray Sturdy**
19th HALF TERM
26th – Carry on Remembering by speaker **Rose Cook Monk**

MARCH

5th—Stourbridge Glass Industry by speaker **Dr Kate Round**
12th—ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
19th—Richard III—Monster, The Myth & the Man by speaker **Mary Bodfish**
26th—Suffragists & Suffragettes by speaker **Emma Spencer**

New Members are always welcome and the first two sessions are free.

For further information, please contact

**Stuart Lawley on
01902 882973**

HAPPY NEW YEAR

*to all our wonderful readers, advertisers, designers,
printers and distributors—without you we would not be
here! Have a very happy, healthy and prosperous 2026.*

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