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Chris Smith - We Remember!

ISSUE 222 | MARCH 2026



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Village Voice

Community magazine for
Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

Cover story

And just like that it is March! I think most people will agree that we seem to have had a very long Winter. 20th March will see the start of Spring which is a season of renewal. It is a time when nature awakens, trees sprout fresh leaves and flowers and shrubs once more show us their vibrant colours. It is lovely to hear once again the birdsong in the garden and this is a reminder that we still need to feed our feathered friends. It is important to maintain a consistent feeding schedule because birds do rely heavily on feeders when natural food is limited. As we move into Spring, birds will naturally seek out insects and seeds which are crucial for their young but do keep an eye on your feeders in order to gauge the demand for food.

Gail



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Please note that the closing date for our competition this month is **TUESDAY, 24th MARCH 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 **APRIL 2026** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **WEDNESDAY, 18th MARCH 2026.** Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.

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Courtesy of THE ROBIN in Bilston, we have two tickets up for grabs for one lucky winner. All you have to do to be entered is to send your **NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **EMAIL ADDRESS** to villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk or write to us at The Robin Tickets, Forge House, 50 Redhall Road, Dudley DY3 2NL. The lucky winner will be drawn on **Monday 24th March 2026 – GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **RON TURNER** of **COOKLEY** who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **FEBRUARY 2026** edition.

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BRAINTEASERS

This time we are giving you a mixture of Brainteasers but beware...they are not as easy as they look! Answers are on page 56.

1. ABSORB DIVIDE GLITCH
MARGIN RECESS

Which of the following words belong in the list...and why?

QUIVER SHAKEN SHIVER TINGLE

2. A man was born in 1964 and died at the age of 25 in 1984. How?

3. What two words have the most letters in them?

4. Forwards I'm heavy, but backwards I'm not. What am I?

5. A simple sum...divide 30 by 1/2 and then add 10. What is the answer?

6. A woman has seven children and half are boys. How can this be?

7. A butcher is 6'1" tall. What does he weigh

8. We finish with a series of word puzzles. Just say what you see:

LMOTAHERW

9. This is slightly more tricky:

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10. And finally:

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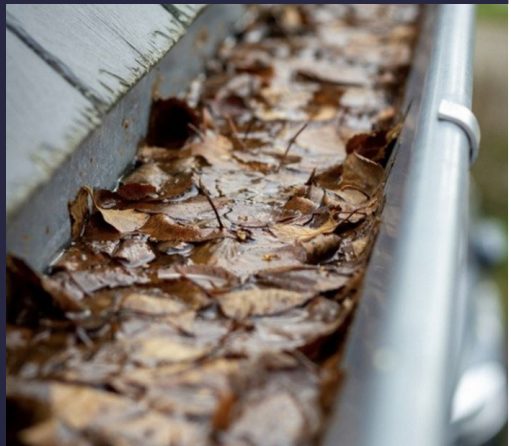
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it's a fact!

- ★ An auction was held at the Star & Garter Hotel in Wolverhampton in June 1890 with the main lot being the Fox Inn on the road between Wolverhampton and Bridgnorth together with 33 acres of land in Trysull. The bidding started at £2000 but the property eventually went for £3075.
- ★ In 1865 William Bonus was charged with fraudulently withholding a cash-book, the property of the Nelsonic Royal Crimson Oak Lodge which met at the Crown Inn, Kinver. He had been Secretary of the Friendly Society for 15 years, receiving an annual salary of £2, but shortly after the books were audited he was dismissed. Once he had left the Society a further audit was planned but the cash-book could not be found. The second audit was held and it was thought that almost £154 was missing from the funds (although without the cash-book it was difficult to tell). Bonus was found guilty of deliberately "losing" the cash-book and fined £10 and £1 costs with the alternative of spending two months in prison. He paid the fine.
- ★ In June 1858 it was announced that the Earl of Stafford and Warrington was planning to create a large racing stables at his home estate, Enville Hall. He had already purchased a number of yearlings and two-year-olds and employed a trainer. By 1863 he had started to have considerable success including winning two important races at the Royal Ascot meeting. This encouraged more owners to send their horses to the Enville stables for training in subsequent years.
- ★ In 1938 the White Harte at Kinver was advertising for a barmaid. Wages were 25/- a week.



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DID YOU KNOW?

During the 12th century St Mary's Church in Bobbington was administered by the Royal Peculiar of Brug.

In 1865 a plan was put forward to build a new railway line linking the existing Great Western Railway lines at Bridgnorth, Wolverhampton and Gornal. The proposed line—known as the Bridgnorth, Wolverhampton & Staffordshire Railway—also included a branch to Swindon.

The plans, however, were later abandoned although a further similar plan by the GWR itself was put forward in 1909. This included a line from Bridgnorth to Wolverhampton with a station at The Bratch in Wombourne. Again, though, the plans were later abandoned.

Bobbington ("the village of Bubba's people") was mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

The village of Trysull was granted a market and annual fair in 1251 by Henry III.

In 1327 there were 18 taxpayers living in Wombourne who were called upon to pay a total of 49 shillings a year. There were 14 taxpayers in Himley (providing 26s/6¼d) and in Seisdon with Trysull 16 taxpayers paying 46 shillings.

The east end of Wombourne High Street is sometimes referred to as Smallbrook but in the past has also been known as 'Townsend' and 'Sodom'.

In 1735 the Blue Coat School based in Wolverhampton purchased for £700 an estate in Seisdon comprising a farmhouse, several cottages and 80 acres of land. The purpose was to become self-sufficient in the production of food for pupils at the school.

It is thought that a cider mill was operational at Crab Mill Farm during the early 19th century. This would have used apples grown locally to make rough cider that was sold in the area.

In the 17th century peas were one of the most widely grown crops in the Bobbington area.

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APR

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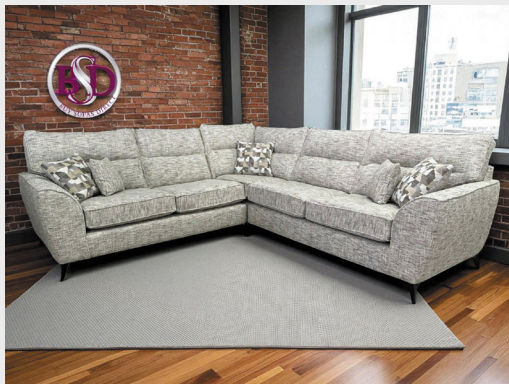
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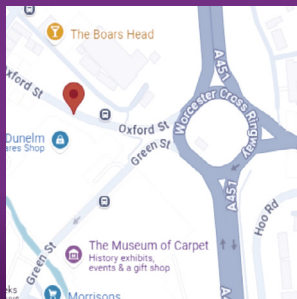
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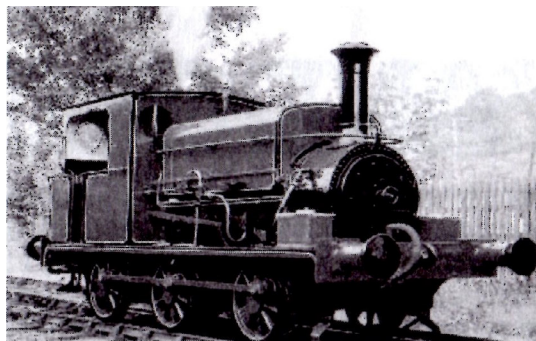
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ON THE RIGHT TRACKS

Over the next few months we will chart the history of the railway that once ran through Wombourne. It had the dubious honour of taking longer in the planning and construction than it achieved in “active service” but it still played an important part in the history of the village for a number of reasons.

In 1852 the Oxford, Worcester & Wolverhampton Railway (OWWR) - known almost universally as ‘The Old Worse & Worse’ was opened linking Oxford, Worcester, Kidderminster, Dudley and Wolverhampton. Some six years later a branch-line from Brettell Lane, Amblecote to the furnaces at Shut End near Kingswinford was constructed (the Kingswinford Branch) and then in 1860 it was further extended towards the Earl of Dudley’s pits at Himley.

In the same year, however, the OWWR was taken over by another small railway company, the West Midland Railway, before it too was acquired by another (more famous company). Its acquisition by the Great Western Railway (GWR) came at a time when industrial growth in the area was at its height and the next few years saw the GWR link with a number of private railways including the Pensnett (one of the oldest in the country) and Shut End railways.



‘Arthur’ was the first motive power on the Wombourne railway line.

In 1905 the GWR proposed a major new undertaking—a new line from Wolverhampton to Bridgnorth with a connection to the Kingswinford Branch. These plans, though, were later modified and in 1913 the scheme underwent substantial revision and new proposals were put forward to build a line from Wolverhampton to Himley where it would join the existing line.

Work on the new line started straight away and the contractors—Perry & Co.—

set up a yard on Planks Lane, Wombourne. A light railway was constructed from Himley towards Wombourne and a locomotive (called ‘Arthur’) was used to ferry materials up and down the line.

‘Arthur’ was built in 1903 in Leeds and is now preserved just outside its ‘birthplace’ although now renamed ‘Matthew Murray’. The construction of the railway attracted many local men to give up their low paid work on the farms to the better paid labouring on the construction for the railway.

In April’s edition we will be highlighting the construction of the track from Gornal through to Wolverhampton.



M.R.W

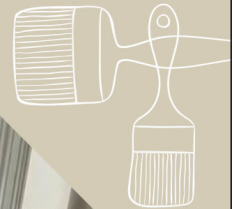
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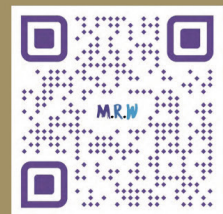
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A DIFFERENT LANGUAGE (ALMOST)

In July 1866 the Bridgnorth Journal & South Shropshire Advertiser included an article—written in somewhat overblown language—about the return of James Moseley of Leaton Park from Australia.

“In no instance of a welcome-home has the sincerity in congratulations been more manifest, within our knowledge, than was rendered conspicuous, by the spontaneous cheers of a vast assemblage who had been called together at Bobbington...to celebrate the return of James Moseley Esq. to his native home, after an absence in an Australian climate for upwards of ten years”. The article continued: “The rich and poor, old and young alike commingled to testify the pleasures all experienced, once more, to receive that gentleman amongst them, and to satisfy him that, although thousands of miles had so long estranged them, he had ever occupied a most prominent position in their love, esteem and respect.”

Details of the event then followed: *“At two o’clock upwards of 70 fine specimens of the tillers of the soil sat down...to partake of an extremely abundant and very excellent dinner which had been provided by Mr and Mrs Nickolls, in the large room of the Red Lion Inn. After this a number of speeches were given and toasts drunk before the assembled company joined the local villagers on a field next to Bobbington Church where entertainment was provided. Cannons were fired, the church bells rung and “throughout the afternoon several rural sports were entered into and prizes then awarded to the successful competitors.” Shortly after 5.00pm a tea for some 180 men and their families was provided in a large tent on the field. Following this dancing commenced with music provided by Mr John Smith’s Brass Band from Bridgnorth. “Music in itself appeared novel to the ears of the inhabitants of the village of Bobbington but whose continuous attendance round the locality of the band, bore evident proof of the thorough appreciation of the melodious strains which from an early hour until night had cast her mantle round, kept their hearts in motion and evoked universal expressions of gratification afforded by the old English and better known strains, as well as some more classical and modern music.”*

The report finished by saying *“in concluding our remarks on this epoch in the history of Bobbington we cannot in justice refrain from adding our testimony to the exemplary conduct of the vast assemblage which at one time of the day could not have numbered less than 800 persons.”*

For several generations the Moseley family lived at Leaton Hall before it was finally sold and converted into 12 flats.



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MOTORING REVIEW

by Bob Hickman

MINI COOPER

There can be few cars that can blend charm, agility, and personality quite like the Mini Cooper. The modern Mini keeps its heritage alive whilst adding refinement and technology that classic owners could only dream of. Under the bonnet sits a 1.5-litre 3-cylinder engine producing around 156 bhp—the 3-cylinder engine has a distinctive sound and a surprising turn of power when revved. Acceleration is brisk, overtaking gives you a sense of confidence, and the car is happiest darting between gears on a winding road. It is light, responsive, and always ready to play. A claimed top speed of 140mph and a 0-60 gallop in 7 seconds is very commendable, Mini suggest a combined figure of 46.3mpg, sadly the computer suggested I only achieved 39.9 mpg during 300 miles of very varied driving situations.



My test car had an automatic DCT transmission and normally I love automatics but, on this occasion, I would have preferred a manual so that I could get a better feel of the driving experience. The ride is firm, especially on larger wheels, but never harsh enough to spoil the experience. If you enjoy driving, the Cooper rewards you every time you pick up speed - it turns into corners with a level of precision more commonly found in hot hatches. Steering is quick and accurate, giving you real confidence when pushing through bends and body roll is minimal, the grip is strong, and the car feels planted and agile, more like a scaled-down sports car than a city hatchback.



Inside you're met with a premium cabin. The huge central display, and circular design elements give the Mini a distinctive look compared with the sensible cabins of most rivals. The central display takes some getting used to however, the graphics are clear and easy to understand and the Apple play mapping was a delight of colour and information. Build quality is solid - materials feel upmarket, and the driving position proved to be excellent with good visibility, on my test car a heads-up display was incorporated and this is a very useful feature. Space, however, is not its strongest selling point. The back seats are tight, boot space is modest and adults

will rebel if asked to travel a lengthy journey in the rear, if you are a couple or have young children then the rear aspect will not concern you.

As with all manufacturers depending on the model you choose the trim you get will vary. My test car had Smartphone connectivity and wireless charging, digital dials and advanced safety systems (some of which can be disconnected, eg lane departure mode). It also was equipped with interior ambient lighting that was customisable. Another gimmick was that in the dark the mini logo was displayed on the floor with a light transferred from the door mirrors. Whilst mentioning the door mirrors I found that when I locked the car by pressing the remote key button and holding it in for a few seconds the door mirrors folded in.

The Mini Cooper remains one of the most fun-to-drive small cars on sale. It blends character, sharp handling, premium quality and a genuinely joyful driving experience. It is all wrapped in a package that stands out from everything else on the road. It's not the most practical choice, and the ride may feel firm to some, but if you want a car that makes every journey feel special, the Mini Cooper 1.5 is hard to beat. My particular test car had an on the road price of £32,565.

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it's a fact!

- ★ In February 1848 a Commission of Lunacy was convened in Wolverhampton to determine whether Eli Jones of Heath House, Wombourne should be certified as insane. The jury heard that he had been admitted to Aldergate House near Tamworth as he frequently became very confused. His condition had worsened and Dr Palmer, who had treated him for eight years, gave evidence that his patient had suffered delusions and regularly fantasised that he had been travelling the country buying corn. Jones would also ask the same question over and over again, sometimes up to 50 times in a single conversation. Dr Palmer said that he believed that Jones was suffering from “organic disease of the brain” which was incurable. This view was supported by a second doctor, Mr R.L. Campbell, a surgeon from Trysull. At the end of the evidence the jury only took a few minutes to find Eli Jones insane and incapable of looking after himself and his estate.
- ★ In August 1939 the Kinver & District Horticultural Society held its 15th annual show at White Hill in the village. It attracted a record entry of 920 exhibits and was opened by Mrs Francis Grazebrook of Stourton Castle. In her opening speech she put out an appeal for visitors to Kinver not to pick the wild flowers around the village.
- ★ For many years the bell at St. John’s Church, Swindon had a somewhat tinny tone and so in 1953, to commemorate the Queen’s coronation, it was decided to purchase a new bell with a more musical sound. The bell cost £134.93.

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FOR THE LOVE OF...CIDER

A review by Trevor Langley



Cider (Cyder) is traditionally made from apple juice, but can also be made from pears, peaches and other fruits. It is a very popular beverage and, in these modern times, can be found in alcoholic, low and non-alcoholic forms. Several excellent cider producing families and companies are located in the UK. Cider can vary from dry to sweet in taste and have differences in clarity and colour. Still and sparkling variations are available and cider festivals are most popular.

Some producers of cider are very large companies, whilst others are smaller, plus independent family businesses. For my 'Cider Quest', I have located a company that is committed and dedicated to producing high-quality ciders, that are crisp, refreshing and have style.

The award-winning Kicking Goat company produces premium quality, craft ciders. Having very good aromas, the productions are refreshing and smooth, with superb, classic flavours, for the mouth's pleasures and the palate's extended delight. Their wording states, 'All apple, no kidding' and only the very best apples, from their Kent and Somerset family orchards, are used. Seventeen varieties, of top quality apples, are harvested from the cider orchards, which produce end products of distinction. The apple varieties which are used to an exceptional advantage include Kentish Gala, Bramley, Red Windsor, Lilibet, Russett, Smitten and Greensleaves, for the Kent ranges. For the Somerset ranges of ciders, varieties include Yarlinton Mill, Michelin, Bulmers Norman, Stoke Red, Somerset Red Streak, Dabinette and Stembridge Jersey.

The Kicking Goat ciders have dry, medium-dry and other delectations, all within their ranges. Packs can be for any type and style, plus mixed cases and also gift sets, containing various beverages, perhaps for a present, for someone special? For social drinking and for an event or occasion, I found the Kicking Goat ciders to have something to satisfy all tastes and palates. Truly, worthwhile looking into. The very informative website has all details, including stockists and online ordering is easy. Highly recommended.

Kicking Goat Cider, Court Lodge Farm, Stonebridge Green Road, Egerton, Kent TN27 9AN.

Kicking Goat Cider, Lady Farm, Chelwood, Somerset BS39 4NN. Tel: 01183 044215.

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**COMING UP IN THE
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Trevor Langley



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Mother's
DAY

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

These occasions were great family affairs and it became the tradition that domestic servants were given the day off in order to return to their families for the day. Quite often the sons and daughters returning to their families would bring with them a small gift for their mother—hence the modern tradition of buying a small gift. In days gone by the gift would often be wild flowers picked from the hedgerows or a small simnel cake—a rich fruit cake not dissimilar to Christmas cake) which is usually decorated with 11 balls of marzipan to denote the 11 'true' disciples of Christ—Judas was excluded for obvious reasons. There are various suggestions about the origins of the name 'simnel' although generally it is accepted that it derives from the Latin 'similia' meaning a light wheaten flour which was used in its baking. Traditionally flowers are given to mothers on their special day—in this country spring flowers are given whilst both Japan and Australia have adopted the American custom of giving carnations although America is also known to give chrysanthemums.

In Serbia, Mother's Day is celebrated in December and forms a trio of commemorations including Children's and Father's Day on consecutive Sundays. On each occasion the subject is tied up with rope—Majika (mum) stays tethered until she agrees to supply treats to her children! However you decide to celebrate on Mother's Day we do hope you have a wonderful time.

— POEMS FROM —
A BLACK COUNTRY BLOKE



JOHN HOMER

For many years John Homer 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.

He has now put pen to paper to produce a book of poetry '**Poems from a Black Country Bloke**' which is dedicated to all things Black Country—a wonderful collection of poems about his youth and life in general.

The book is available to buy at **£9.99 (plus postage)**—please contact John on **07818 291578** or **01384 236827** or email him at **johnhomerwba@hotmail.co.uk**

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When the airfield was originally built for the RAF in 1939 the main contractor was McAlpines. Thirty one years later the company was one of the first to base its own aircraft at the airfield.

The first aircraft landed at Halfpenny Green on 22nd March 1941. It was a Miles Magister trainer from the RAF. Over the following week it spent many hours taking off and landing at the airfield, checking the safety of the approach from all areas.

In 1961 there were just 750 aircraft movements (take-offs and landings). In 1990 there were 67,363.

In 1968 the windsock used at Halfpenny Green was donated to the International Red Cross to be used in Biafra on an emergency airstrip bringing vital aid to the country.

Over the years various plans were hatched for using the airfield. These included using it as a base for training pilots for BEA and BOAC, a permanent venue for pop festivals and as a motor racing circuit.

Halfpenny Green was renamed 'Chilford Green' for the children's TV series "*Flight Into Danger*" which was largely shot at the airfield during June 1972. The series, though, was not a success and was soon taken off our screens.

The first jet to land at Halfpenny Green was a Cessna Citation 500 Quietjet belonging to Group 4 Security. It landed on 10th March 1978, much to the concern of local residents who believed that it may herald the regular use of the airfield by larger and more noisy aircraft. May Bank Holiday in 1980 saw over 50,000 spectators at Halfpenny Green for a motorcycle grass track event that attracted many of the sport's top competitors including three world champions.

In August 1987 a British Airways Concorde made two low passes over the airfield on its way to and from an air display at RAF Cosford. WAAG—the Wolverhampton Airport Active Group—was formed in 2003 to fight plans to develop Halfpenny Green into a commercial airport.

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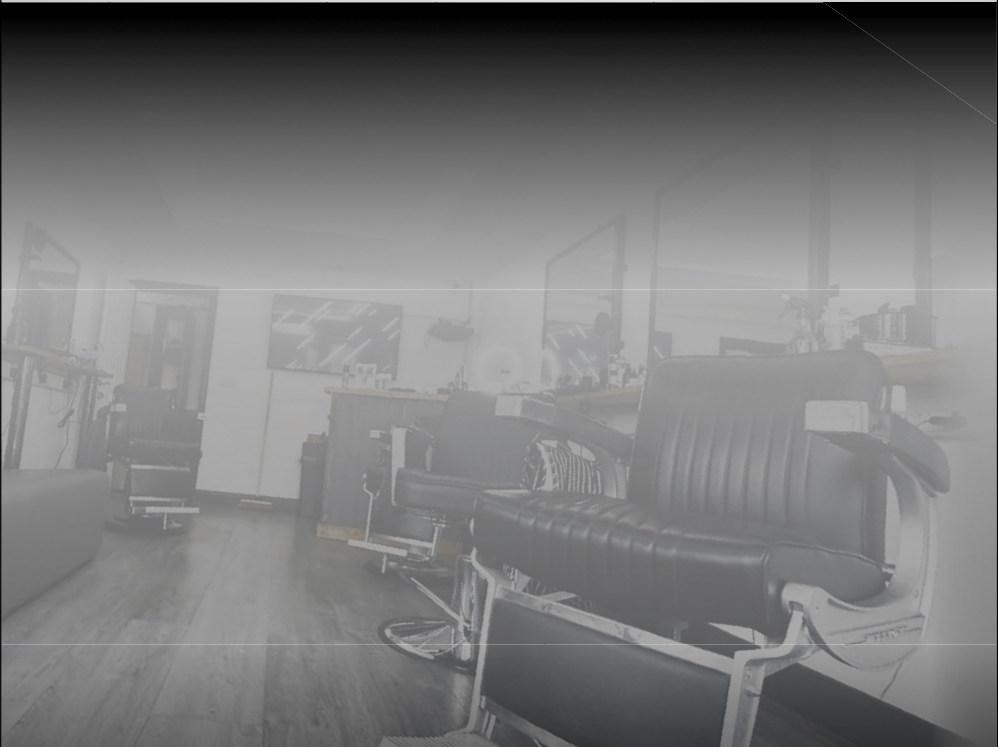
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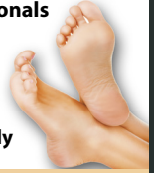
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DO YOU REMEMBER?

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If you bought the latest Beatles/Rolling Stones/
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come round and sit on the floor listening to it
for hours.

Children's toys did not need batteries.

Terms such as “politically correct”, “software”
and “apps” didn't exist.

Coke referred to smokeless fuel rather than a
soft drink or illegal drug and grass was mown
rather than smoked!

It took five minutes for the television to warm
up when you switched it on (and when you
switched it off the little white dot in the middle
of the screen slowly disappeared).

Male school teachers wore a shirt and tie to
work.

‘Twitter’ was what birds did.

Travelling by air was a pleasure rather than a
nightmare.

You didn't need to spend a week's wages to
take your son to a top class football match.

Schools didn't extend the school holidays by
having “staff training days” on the first day of
each term.

Shaw Taylor told us to “keep them peeled” at
the end of Police 5.

Paying for Christmas didn't last until the next
August Bank Holiday!

Newspapers were full of news rather than
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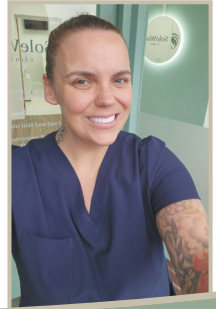


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it's a fact!

- ★ In December 1901 John Duggett, a tailor, was sent to prison for three months with hard labour for fraud. He pretended to be an official of the Stourbridge Workhouse and ordered various items from local suppliers. He took a commission from the suppliers but their goods were rejected at the Workhouse. In one instance he ordered four tons of clover and two loads of potatoes from a farmer called Glover in Kinver, taking a commission of two shillings. After this he fled to Sheffield but was found, arrested and brought back to the Midlands where he appeared at the Stafford Assizes.
- ★ For many years the Bell Inn in High Street, Kingswinford was owned by the Wheelwright's Arms Brewery in Netherton. This was started by Samuel Kendrick Houghton in 1873 and then taken over by Joseph Davies who at first rented the brewery and beerhouse before purchasing it outright in 1888. The enterprise expanded considerably over the years as generation after generation of the Davies family took charge. In 1942, however, the family sold the brewery, its 12 pubs and two off-licences to Mitchells & Butlers. As well as the Bell the company owned the Old Swan at Pensnett, the Mount at Wombourne and the Crown at Kinver.
- ★ The last horse-drawn tram to operate between Wolverhampton and Tettenhall was found being used as a garden shed at Beech Home Farm in Seisdon in 1973. Built in 1892, the tram had been in service until 1904 when it was replaced by an electric tram. It was acquired by the Black Country Living Museum who have restored it to its working condition.



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

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

It is for this reason that many of the traditional symbols of Easter are connected with birth, fertility and good luck. Long before chocolate Easter eggs were invented chicken or duck eggs were used as a gift by children to their parents. The children would paint the eggs and give them on the morning of Easter Day.

The Easter Bunny—another symbol of fertility—is associated with the festival largely due to its ability to reproduce very rapidly. Indeed, in Australia where it is something of a pest because of its high birth rate, some communities have banned the Easter Bunny in shops, replacing it with the Easter Bilby, an endangered small marsupial. Another endangered race is the traditional Morris Men who entertain in villages both large and small especially around Eastertime. Many of their songs and dances are connected with the annual contest between Winter and Summer and have been around for hundreds of years—even Shakespeare refers to the “old art” of Morris dancing.

Whilst there are different forms of Morris dancing all varieties make full use of sticks, swords and other implements and it is thought that the term “to shake a stick” at something has its origins in Morris. Although England is the traditional home of Morris dancing there are now over 150 teams in the US, many more than in the UK. There is apparently also one in Hong Kong and at least two in India!





MARCH

AT THE ROBIN



AIRTIGHT 80s

SATURDAY 7TH MARCH

SUNDAY 1ST MARCH
IAN McNABB
OF THE ICICLE WORKS

THURSDAY 5TH MARCH
THE SUBWAYS
UNPLUGGED ACOUSTIC SHOW

FRIDAY 6TH MARCH
DAN BUDD AS ROBBIE WILLIAMS
ROBBIE WILLIAMS TRIBUTE

SATURDAY 7TH MARCH
AIRTIGHT 80's
80's ROCK TRIBUTE

SUNDAY 8TH MARCH
SIMPLY DAN
STEELY DAN TRIBUTE

THURSDAY 12TH MARCH
TRANSMISSION
JOY DIVISION TRIBUTE

FRIDAY 13TH MARCH
FLEETWOOD BAC
FLEETWOOD MAC TRIBUTE

SATURDAY 14TH MARCH
THAT'S SO 90's
90's PARTY NIGHT

SUNDAY 15TH MARCH
SEX PISTOLS EXPOSE
SEX PISTOLS TRIBUTE

FRIDAY 20TH MARCH
THE MACC LADS

SATURDAY 21ST MARCH
FELLOUT BOY & BLACK CHARADE
FALLOUT BOY & MCR TRIBUTES

SUNDAY 22ND MARCH
JOHN POWER
CAST, THE LA'S & ME

FRIDAY 27TH MARCH
DETROIT SOUL COLLECTIVE
LIVE SOUL & MOTOWN BAND

SATURDAY 28TH MARCH
JOHNNY2BAD
UB40 TRIBUTE

SUNDAY 29TH MARCH
THE FILLERS
THE KILLERS TRIBUTE

THE MACC LADS



FRIDAY 20TH MARCH

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A
GARDENER'S
WORK
IS NEVER
DONE!



MARCH

After so much uncertainty with the weather during January and February we are all now hoping for a better March. Besides the various dips in temperature it is pleasing to see that trees and shrubs are beginning to bud which signals that Spring is just around the corner. Many gardeners have already started preparing the ground for the planting of Spring vegetables, additional shrubs and hardy perennials.

In the vegetable area, only plant out when temperatures are above freezing, ensuring plants are hardy and have been acclimatised to outside conditions (hardened off) before planting. You can pre-warm the soil by putting cloches or clear plastic sheeting over the ground a few days before planting as well as over seeds or small vegetable plants—this will enable you to plant certain crops such as broad beans slightly earlier than planting in over exposed and open air areas.

By using a warm or heated greenhouse or a heated propagator will give you a little more flexibility as to where you grow your seedlings—you can start to sow many varieties of seeds, from tomatoes and chillies to beetroot and salads. The earlier sown (and carefully grown) the earlier you can enjoy them in late spring and early summer. Moreover, keep sowing over the next few weeks to extend the harvest period.

At the same time start propagating cuttings of fuchsias, geraniums and trailing plants for tubs and baskets and sowing seeds for summer bedding plants. Alternatively, consider buying plug plants from the end of March (plug plants will have been cultivated in professional greenhouses thus giving you a head start and without all the germination headaches.

There are many other jobs in the garden that will need your attention during March such as:

- ◆ Mowing the grass for the first time on a high cut (but only after major frosts have finished)
- ◆ Pruning and shaping hedges and trees, roses and climbing plants.
- ◆ Chit potatoes and prepare growing pots on the ground for potatoes.
- ◆ Feed brassicas with high nitrogen plant food alongside fruit trees and fruit bushes.
- ◆ Protect plants from pests like slugs—there are various organic options available that can be tried rather than resorting to slug pellets. Watch out for vine weevil grubs too.
- ◆ Order and plant tubers of semi-hardy annuals such as dahlias and begonias.
- ◆ Don't forget to look after the wildlife in your garden particularly our feathered friends—it has been a harsh winter for them so we do need to keep them well topped up with food.

HAPPY GARDENING

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This month we have **TWO** family tickets for the Odeon Cinema at Merry Hill up for grabs. There are some great films due for release over the next couple of months which will keep the whole family entertained so why not see if you can win some **FREE** tickets. Please note, only one entry per person – multiple entries will not be entered into the draw.

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

(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 **Tuesday, 24th March 2026**. Good luck!

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

HIDDEN WORDS

1. ODEON
2. LIMITLESS
3. CINEMA
4. VOUCHER
5. PREMIERE
6. CLUB
7. COFFEE
8. HILL
9. FILM
10. ISENSE
11. SCREEN
12. COSTA
13. MERRY
14. GIFT
15. SAVER
16. REWARDS

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it's a fact!

- ★ **In August 1849** the contents of John Russell's surgery in Kinver were offered at auction as he was retiring and moving away from the area. Items for sale included six nests of shelves (with drawers), a counter, a large quantity of jars and bottles and scales.
- ★ In October 1874 the Birmingham Daily Post carried the advertisement: "Lost on Monday 12th instant, between Kinver and the Stewpony, a blue-and-white-coloured greyhound dog—anyone returning him to the Police Station, Wombourne will be rewarded".
- ★ **In February 1870** there was much anticipation in Wombourne when it was announced that there were plans to open a telegraph office in the sub-Post Office in the village. Until then all telegrams could only be received at Wolverhampton and Dudley causing considerable delays.
- ★ The miners' strike in 1926 caused considerable hardship and disruption throughout the country. One of the consequences was that many of the railway companies reduced the number and frequency of their services in order to preserve their stocks of coal. The Great Western Railway even went as far as closing the Stourbridge to Wolverhampton (via Wombourne) line completely.
- ★ **In March 1883** a young woman called Sarah Ann Summers of Bobbington broke her collar-bone, leg and arm when she jumped from a train on the Severn Valley Railway. She had meant to get off the train at Hampton Loade but had not noticed that the train had reached the station until it departed.



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BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

1. QUIVER—all the words have their first and last letters consecutive in the alphabet.
2. He was born in Room 1964 at his local hospital and died 25 years later in Room 1984.
3. Post Office!
4. Ton
5. 30 divided by $\frac{1}{2}$ is 60, add 10 makes 70.
6. All the children are boys—so half are male...and so is the other half!
7. Meat!
8. Mother-in-law.
9. Four score and ten
10. Paradise!!!!

We are busy searching out some even trickier ones for the April edition. Watch this space!

COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **FEBRUARY** edition was **THROUGH** which was misspelt. The two lucky winners who each receive a **FAMILY PASS to WEST MIDLANDS SAFARI PARK** are:

LYNNE GEORGE of **KINVER** and
SUE POLE of **KINGSWINFORD**

You can find this month's competition on page 52.

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



IN BILSTON

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 **Monday 24th March 2026 – GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **RON TURNER** of **COOKLEY** who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **FEBRUARY 2026** edition.

OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

Sabine, Grace and Bladys



A scene from the silent film, 'Bladys of the Stewponney'

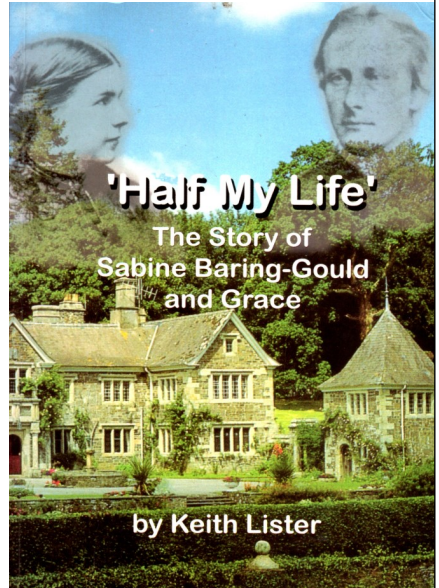
'*Bladys of the Stewponney*', a romance of intrigue and adventure, set around the cave dwellings of Kinver, was by the Reverend Sabine Baring-Gould. When, as a young enthusiastic clergyman in the North of England, and a challenging song was needed for a Whit Monday children's parade, he came up with the words for 'Onward Christian Soldiers'. Some maintained that a local dialect poet, Ben Preston, was the originator, but Baring-Gould's ability with other lyrics, including '*Now the Day is Over*', has secured his name to a hymn (with the tune by Arthur Sullivan of Gilbert & Sullivan fame), taking it around the world.

While in Yorkshire Sabine fell in love with Grace, a young mill girl. As he would be inheriting the estate of Lew Trenchard, this pretty young girl was sent into York, to receive an education then considered suitable for the wife of a squire, where she would be responsible for the running of staff and a large household.

As an avid collector of legends and folklore, Sabine's (pronounced Saybin) 'Bladys' was written after a stay with a Kinver clergyman. In 1917, Old Hill industrialist, Ben Priest, financed the silent film. Both professional actors and local folk took part, and what few stills were actually discovered, reveal scenes traced to Kinver and even Pembridge in Herefordshire.

Without Sabine Baring-Gould we would probably never have had the folk song '*Widdecombe Fair, Tom Pearce and his Grey Mare*'. A notator of music accompanied him on such 'tradition-preserving' expeditions.

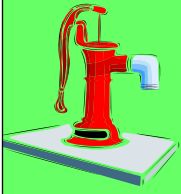
Oh, and his marriage to Grace worked perfectly; this Devonshire squire and parson loved her very much. I love a happy ending—and I imagine you would agree that 15 children confirmed that!



The cover of 'Half My Life' by Keith Lister

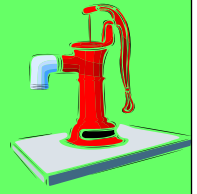
By John Sparry, Ridge Cot, 15 Enville Road, Wall Heath
Mobile: 07831 342209

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



The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

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mini workshop making mini cushion

Crazy Quilts April 15
techniques, embroidery, embellishing

The Year So Far May 20
Show and Tell, Sit and Sew



Where do we meet?

'The Hand-in-Hand Centre'

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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.




The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver PARISH PUMP



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Saturday March 28th 2026

Featuring
Laura Davies

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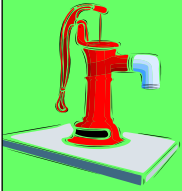
Penn Singers supporting
acorns children's hospice



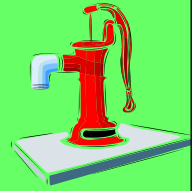
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THE NEXT PARISH PUMP WILL
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EDITION AND THE COPY
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Wednesday, 18th March 2026.

Don't forget that insertions are free if
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The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver PARISH PUMP



Family History Course



Wombourne Library will be offering a FREE 5 week Family History course in association with Penny from Midland Ancestors, starting in February. Get help and advice to begin your journey into your family's story

5 week course starting:
Wednesday 25th February at 10am

The courses are absolutely FREE, but please book as places are limited

Contact Wombourne Library on 01902 506055 to book



Sit and Sew Group

Fortnightly on Thursdays—10am-12.30pm

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Everyone welcome, experienced sewers or beginners.

Bring along sewing of your choice or just join us for coffee, biscuits and a chat.

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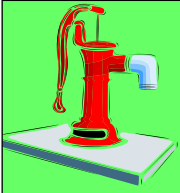
**Telephone Babs on 07902 622894
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NATIONAL SERVICE (RAF) ASSOCIATION

We are a group of men who did their National Service in the RAF back in the 1950s. We meet every month at midday on the second Tuesday of the month in the Community Hub at RAF Cosford, Wolverhampton WV7 3EX where we have a guest speaker and generally put the world to rights.

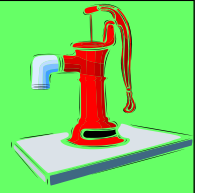
As we say every Remembrance Day, we who are left grow old and sadly our membership is dwindling, but we feel that there may be readers of Village Voice who were Erks and who might be interested in joining us for the sum of £5.00 per year. This covers the postage of our monthly newsletter, The Erk, (*for those who may be confused, an Erk was the slang name for another rank in the RAF*).

If anyone is interested, please do come along to one of our meetings where you will receive a very warm welcome. Alternatively, please contact Gail at Village Voice (at villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk) who will pass on our contact details.



The Wombourne, Swindon, Penn & Kinver

PARISH PUMP



Craft & Chat!

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11am til 1pm

At The Red Lion Wombourne

Bring your crafts & have a natter!

theWI INSPIRING WOMEN

Would you like to join a local group of lovely women, some of which love to craft, some want to bake, some want to learn or share these skills, some love the chat and company, others are keen to help raise funds and others want to feel they are part of the community as well as being part of a national institution that helps to change people's lives. Wombourne Women's Institute may be just what you're looking for and we're certainly looking for you! This group has been running for over 100 years and is very much a part of Wombourne village. With the village increasing in size, we want our group to reflect the same. We are looking for new members to ensure the group continues for many more decades to come. If this appeals to you, come and join us for a free taster session.

Please do get in touch:

Our Facebook page can be found at

Wombourne WI

Our email address is

WombourneWI@outlook.com

Or contact **Liz, Lynda or Donna** on the following numbers

07711 093081 – Liz

07584 432148 – Lynda

07837 719502- Donna

Come and meet us and have some fun

Exciting Weekly Activities for Little Ones at Wombourne Library

Tots Time
Mondays
2-3pm

Baby Bounce & Rhyme
Thursdays
10:30-11am

Storytime
Fridays
10.15-10.45am

Call 01902 506055 or email Wombourne.library@staffordshire.gov.uk
Term time Only



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ON THE HOME FRONT PAGES 38-39

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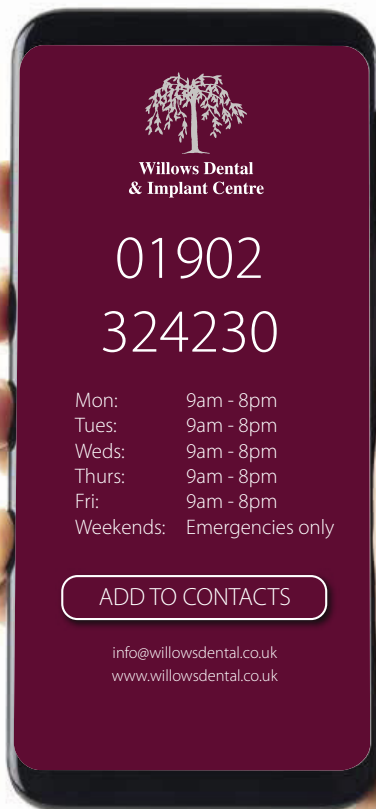
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