

FREE

Village Voice

Chris Smith - We Remember!

ISSUE 246 | MAY 2026



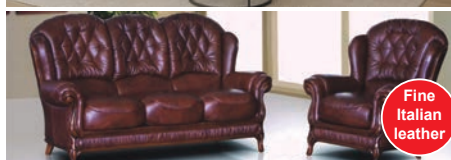
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Village Voice
is published monthly by
Village Voice Magazines Ltd
Forge House, 50 Redhall Road,
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Village Voice

Community magazine for
Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton

Cover story

This month in our magazines we are thinking more about birdlife and somewhat quirky garden ornaments.

Our front cover is an arty photograph of the Great Spotted Woodpecker, an extremely striking medium sized, black and white bird with distinctive red markings. This species tends to be found in all types of woodland as well as gardens and farmland with scattered trees. Its range spans from Great Britain through to Japan and North Africa. They spend much of their time climbing tree trunks in order to extract insects as well as seeds, nuts and fruits.

Don't forget the birdlife in your garden this month – birds in general are looking after their young and need as much food as they can possibly get.

Gail



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20,28,40,44 It's A Fact!

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45 In our Charity Focus this month we highlight the Geoff Hill Charitable Trust.

52-53 If you are responsible within your group or association for booking speakers then you might find this article useful.

56 Brainteasers Answers

56 Your chance to win 2 x tickets to the fabulous Robin Club in Bilston.

57-61 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, 22nd MAY 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 **JUNE 2026** edition of **VILLAGE VOICE** is **MONDAY, 18th MAY 2026**. Please book your space early to avoid disappointment.

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Whilst recently talking to Karen Hayes who for many years ran the highly successful Occasional Cakes in Kingswinford, I asked her if she could come up with a cake recipe for Spring and she did not disappoint with her Lemon Drizzle cake.

Ingredients:

225g slightly salted butter
225g caster sugar
4 large eggs
225g self raising flour
1 lemon for juice and zest

For the topping:

2 juiced lemons
150g icing sugar



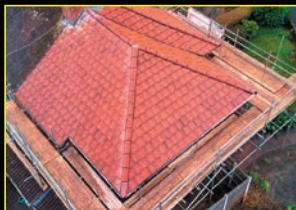
Method:

Heat the oven to 170 or gas 4. Beat together all the butter and sugar until light and fluffy and then add the eggs one by one mixing slowly. Sift in the flour and lemon zest and combine. Grease and line a loaf tin and spoon in the mixture. Cook for 45 to 55 minutes depending on oven—test the cake with a skewer to ensure it is cooked. Leave the cake to cool in the tin but before it is completely cold mix together the lemon juice with the icing sugar. Spike holes in the cake (diagonally so that the juice doesn't run straight out) and pour the mixed icing sugar all over the cake allowing it to drip into the cake. Leave to go cold. Store in a cool dry place ...never store cakes in the fridge, ideally in an airtight container.



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BRAINTEASERS

We have a variety of puzzles this time, some ridiculously easy and others much more difficult. If you need the answers (and we bet you will!) they can be found on page 56.

1. Our first group of questions are homophones—pairs of words that sound the same such as Head Covering (hair) and Mad in March (hare). See if you can get these:
 - (i) Poverty / Work dough
 - (ii) Mrs Horse / First citizen
 - (iii) European country / Unfed
 - (iv) Wear down / Glass container
 - (v) Poem / Debt
2. Which is correct: Six and seven IS fourteen or six and seven ARE fourteen?
3. If a hen and a half lay an egg and a half in a day and a half, how many eggs would six hens lay at the same rate in six days?
4. This is one of the hardest we have set! A petrol tanker drives at a steady 30mph but the drain plug is incorrectly fitted and it is dripping petrol as it drives along. A carelessly discarded cigarette end ignites the dripping fuel and the flames travel along the road towards the tanker at 25mph. After 26 miles the tanker stops. How long will it be before the flames reach the tanker?
5. A few Rebus puzzles. Just say what you see:
 - A. O-ER-T-O-
 - B. Zain, Yain, Xain, Wain, Vain, Uain, Tain, Sain, Rain, Qain, Oain, Nain, Main, Lain, Kain, Jain, Iain, Hain, Fain, Eain, Dain, Cain, Bain, Aain.
 - C. You are given two dice, what are the odds that when you throw them the total on the two upper faces will be an odd number?

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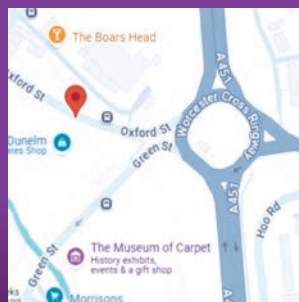
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A WEEK IN PRISON AFTER DEATHS OF TWO DAUGHTERS

In 1862 Isaac Thompson from Sedgley stood trial for killing his 8 year old daughter in a fit of temper. He was found guilty by the jury...but sentenced to just a week in prison. And what is more amazing was that he had previously appeared in court for unlawfully wounding another daughter, Rachel, and killing a third daughter called Martha!

In all three cases Thompson blamed his wife whom he described as a “drunkard”. On the first occasion Thompson said he arrived home to find his wife was out and that Rachel—who was only 13 at the time—had not been looking after her sisters properly. He lost his temper and threw a metal spike across the kitchen at her—and the spike embedded itself in her back. Somewhat surprisingly the local magistrates sympathised with Thompson by taking into account the actions of his wife who was clearly somewhat of an inadequate mother and fined him just 5 shillings plus costs for this act.

It was just two months later that Thompson was again in court charged with causing the death of 18 month old Martha. He had taken her down to the kitchen one night but he had left her there. In the morning the baby’s dead body was found on the floor. Thompson appeared in court but the magistrates remanded him on bail to appear before the forthcoming Assizes in Stafford. Before he was due to stand trial, however he was again arrested, this time for “accidentally” throwing a poker at Hannah and killing her. The jury took a long time deliberating on their verdict and eventually declared Thompson guilty of the murder of Hannah but then they recommended a light sentence because of his “thoroughly bad wife”. He was sentenced to just one week in prison. The case against him for the death of baby Martha was not proceeded with by the prosecutor and he was therefore found not guilty of that charge.

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DID YOU KNOW?

One of the characters of old Gornal in days gone by was 'Hannah the Blackin'. She lived in a small cottage on the corner of Stickley Road and Ruiton Street and spent most of her time making pikelets. She was frequently seen trundling her three-wheeled basket carriage full of the savouries around the village. Indeed, the local children frequently followed her around and were even known to steal the odd pikelet. They often chanted a rhyme:

*"Hannah the Blackin
The pikelet 'ooman only' as one eye
'Er pushes 'er carriage
An' carries 'er basket
And then 'er starts ter cry"*

In 1868 Dr Ballenden, Sedgley's medical officer of health, described the area in his report as: "Thirty years amongst the nailers of Sedgley convinces me that they are the most immoral people in England. The women have more manly qualities than the men and in free fights the wife is generally the victor."

Virtually no Roman remains have been found in Sedgley. A few Roman coins dating from the first century AD have been discovered (including one on what is now the playing fields of Dormston School) but there is no evidence of any buildings from the period.

Lower Gornal Darby & Joan Club was opened in 1957 and cost £5000 to build. Today it still provides a valuable meeting place for local senior citizens and also various groups and associations.



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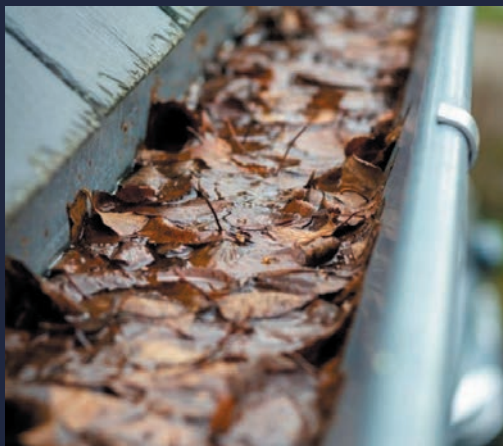
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One of the worst predators is the domestic cat – especially as rarely do they need to kill for food. If you are a cat owner why not ensure that your feline friend has a bell around his/her neck. It won't stop them stalking potential prey – but it does give their possible victims a bit better chance of escaping a sudden demise. Early summer is always a good time to see hedgehogs as they are particularly active around now. But don't be fooled into thinking that a saucerful of bread and milk would be a kindness – not so. Milk is too rich for the hedgehog and the bread will swell up inside it and cause pain. Far better to put a saucer of water and a crunched up digestive biscuit.

Finally, many of our garden birds will have hatched their young by now and many of their fledglings will be trying out their skills in flying—and landing!

If you come across a baby bird on the ground that seems to be helpless don't pick it up and feel that you have to look after it (it will almost certainly die within a very short period of time). Leave it where you found it and the chances are that one or both of its parents will be along soon to take care of it. Indeed, it is surprising how quickly babies can recover with a little bit of encouragement from their mother!



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SEDGLEY AND DISTRICT COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

INTO IT'S 40TH YEAR: A BRIEF HISTORY

Sedgley and District Community Association is entering into its 40th year. Initially a 'Steering Group' was formed and then in March 1981 site options were discussed. Many turned out to be unsuitable but a plot in Ladies Walk seemed to be a good option. It turned out to be available, so planning permission was sought. Various funding was secured, including £20,000 from council reorganisation grants and one in lieu of open space for new housing. It was agreed that Phase One would be to seek approval for a small building. The



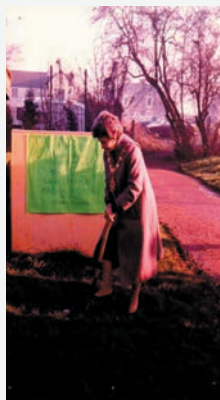
first phase was built with labour paid for by a government scheme and materials were paid for by the group. Building started in January 1985 with a hall, kitchen, storeroom and toilets. The completed building opened in December 1986. The site store etc. remained in-situ and was used for selling repackaged garden supplies, leading to the SDCA gardening section joining the Over Fifties' and Bridge Sections. A memorial to "the fallen", opened in July 1989. It read *'the smallest seed left in the soil will grow again and multiply'*. A sculpture of a blade of wheat by Mark Renn was then added for which he won the City of Birmingham Art Award.

The first extension was the committee room and, as money was "short", the contractor agreed final instalments could be paid over two years! There then followed a computer learning room and in time further grants were secured including National Lottery and landfill tax charities. The total cost of the extension was £365,000 and was completed in November 2007. A grant was also secured for rainwater harvesting to flush toilets. Once the main building had been completed all eyes turned to a much

needed car park. It was estimated that this would cost in the region of £75,000—again the group sought funding and the car park was finally opened in October 2021. The building itself opened in 1986 and is now celebrating its 45th year since the original steering group AGM. To further add to this accolade one of the original members of the Association's Managing Committee, Mary Lavender, is still an active member of the Association. During Covid the centre was largely unoccupied but essential services had to be maintained and financial reserves were drained almost to the point of exhaustion. In August 2024, 56 solar panels were installed on the Hall roof—the finance of this project was secured with a grant.



The Community Centre in Ladies Walk has high occupancy but is always keen to welcome new groups and visitors. As well as coffee mornings (3rd Saturday of each month) there are babies, "seniors", bridge, gardening, sport and craft groups/classes, amongst many others.





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it's a fact!

- ★ At the end of the 16th century the Manor of Sedgley was sold by the Dudleys—who had owned it for almost 200 years—to the Parkes family of Wednesbury who already owned Willingsworth Hall within the Sedgley parish. Almost certainly the sale was made necessary after a visit by Queen Elizabeth I to Dudley in 1575. Such visits were always horrendously expensive for the host who had to cater for every need, not only for the Royal personage but also for up to 200 hangers on.
- ★ In August 1921 a six year old boy called Leslie Love had a narrow escape when he fell into the canal in Coseley. His elder brother caught hold of his hand but had to let go. Fortunately a young man called Thomas Foxall of Hall Street, Tipton was passing and dived in and rescued him (with the help of another passer-by, James Skinner of Coseley). Artificial respiration then had to be applied to the child but he soon recovered.
- ★ In May 1918 local papers told of the sad death of a Tipton couple, Mr and Mrs Hodgetts of Dudley Port. They had been told that their son Simeon (who had been serving in France in the East Yorkshire Regiment) had been wounded in action and returned to the UK where he was in hospital in Liverpool. They immediately journeyed up to the North West and found lodgings in a boarding house. Unfortunately, however, the following morning they were found dead apparently suffocated by a leaking gas pipe. Mr Hodgetts (55) had been a miner employed at the Crown Meadow Colliery at Toll End.

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ROAD RAGE—200 YEARS AGO!

If you think that road rage is a particularly new phenomenon think again! We came across this report of a court case at Dudley County Court from 1882.

The case was brought by Thomas Hartland, a carpenter from Coseley against Josiah Smith who was a boatbuilder from Tipton. The claim was £15 as damages for alleged reckless driving and assault. It would seem that Hartland was retuning from a day out at Walsall with his wife and father in a pony and trap but when they were in Sedgley Road they saw Smith driving a similar pony and trap at “excessive speed”. Hartland tried to pull in to the side of the road but the two traps collided and Hartland was thrown out of his trap which itself suffered considerable damage. Although shocked and bruised Hartland picked himself up and remonstrated with Smith—who promptly punched him in the face, causing the hapless Hartland to end up in the gutter. The court heard that Inspector Walters was called to the scene and he reported that Smith was indeed nine inches over the middle of the road when he hit Hartland’s trap. Hartland was awarded the full £15 plus costs.



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WINES: SOME OF ENGLAND'S STILL AND SPARKLING FAVOURITES

A review by Trevor Langley

Multi award-winning Denbies Wine Estate (Est. 1986) is located in Surrey. Utilising several grape varieties, Denbies produces both high-quality still and sparkling wines. My votes (Still):



DENBIES FLINT VALLEY (11.5% vol). This dry white wine pleases on the nose with fresh citrus notes that carry through to the flavour. Splendid with poached and smoked salmon.

DENBIES SURREY GOLD (11% vol) is a medium-dry, white wine and is good for the nasal senses, with the fragrant bouquet enticing to the floral/fruit hints for the mouthfeel and the palate's delight. Pairs very well with foods of a spicy nature, including many Asian dishes of cuisine.

If a 'pink' wine is required, I would like to suggest **DENBIES ROSE HILL** (11% vol). Summer fruits come to mind for this easy-drinking delectation, which I found refreshing and great to add colour to a dining table, as well as for al fresco occasions. A fantastic accompaniment to salads and white meats. My votes (Sparkling, aged, bottle-fermented):

DENBIES GREENFIELDS (12% vol). The colour of golden-straw entices to the aroma and the tasting – an excellent example of a sparkling wine. Crisp, rich and with an extended palate.



DENBIES WHITEDOWNS BRUT (12.5% vol) is very popular, satisfying a lot of sparkling preferences and tastes. With fresh, ripe fruits evident for the mouthfeel, I found this production to be crisp and most pleasurable.

DENBIES CUBITT BLANC DE BLANCS (12% vol) is a much sought-after sparkling production from this company, which is only produced in the best of seasons. The quality is very much appreciated by many. The bouquet is pleasant and appealing, then, the taste buds are activated, continuing on, to a grand finish.

For all information about Denbies, including stockists, wine tastings, forthcoming events, Denbies restaurants, hotel, loyalty club, tours, weddings/receptions and a lot more, please make contact and/or visit their website, which I found very interesting.

Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking, Surrey RH5 6AA. Tel: 01306 876616. E-mail: info@denbiesvineyard.co.uk Web: www.denbies.co.uk

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WINES: SOME FAVOURITES OF LEBANON



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Trevor Langley

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it's a fact!

★ At the beginning of January 1889 the whole of the Midlands was enveloped in a very dense and persistent fog. Indeed so bad was it that great disruption was caused throughout the Black Country, as well as a number of accidents, some of which proved fatal. There were a number of occurrences of people falling into canals in the fog and drowning, with one in particular being especially tragic. Joseph Taylor, a 34 year old puddler from Tunnel Street, Coseley, worked at the Eagle Ironworks at Tipton but on the night of the Great Fog he disappeared. He left work as normal with a friend, James Baker, but on the way back home Baker slipped into the canal and Taylor had to help him out. The two went to Baker's house and, because of the weather, it was decided that Taylor would stay the night. At about 12.30am, however, Taylor decided to walk home and taking a lantern and candle he set off. It was not until the following day after the fog had lifted that the body of Joseph Taylor was found in the same canal from which he had saved his friend just hours before.

★ In November 1717 John Jewkes, a mercer (dealer in textiles) living in London, made a will in which he left £100 to the churchwardens of the parish of Sedgley to purchase land, the rent from which was to be used to buy bread for the poor of the parish. Following his death the churchwardens did indeed use Mr Jewkes' money to buy two pieces of land in Woodsetton which were then named Penny-Loaf Leasow and Penny-Loaf Meadow. These were initially let to Jonah Cartwright and they produced around £13 a year in rent, enough to purchase for the poor 18 sixpenny loaves every fortnight.

The Old Police Station, Vicar Street/Gospel End Street, Sedgley

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Taylors



Our very good friends at Prestwood Cave Nursery have very kindly provided the prize for this month's competition. Our two lucky winners will each win a 14" Hanging Basket.

Will you be a lucky winner?!

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 **PRESTWOOD CAVE NURSERY** 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, 22nd May 2026**. Good luck!

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MINE'S A PINT...OR TWO!

The old Urban District of Sedgley was always known as an area where beer was brewed and drunk in prodigious quantities.

In 1952 in the whole Borough of Dudley (which at that time did not include Stourbridge or Halesowen) there were 210 licenced premises. Of these almost 100 were to be found in Sedgley, Gornal and Coseley.

This was undoubtedly a significant underestimate of the number of places where drink could be bought. Ever since the Ale House Act of 1828 introduced excise licenses for the sale of intoxicating liquor it became a matter of principle for some people to show that the law was there to be broken.

In the 1860s it was estimated that there were at least 30 'Wobble Shops' where drink—often illicitly brewed—was sold illegally. In many cases these drink dens were run purely for groups of friends or family although there were some individuals who made substantial profits out of such operations.

One such individual was Thomas Lane who owned several unlicensed 'pubs' in Coseley and Sedgley. There are records of him being summoned before the magistrates on several occasions, although his punishment is not known.



Ironically, he used the money from his illegal enterprises to start up a building company which promptly won a number of contracts to build pubs in the Sedgley area including the Grand Junction (seen here on the left). Prior to the 1828 Act the emphasis for the Authorities was to make sure that that the beer sold was of an acceptable quality rather than trying to regulate the premises where it

was sold. Sedgley, like other areas, was controlled by a Court Leet (which met at what is now the Courthouse Pub). One of its duties was to appoint an official ale taster or 'Ale Conner' to see that the ale was of a good standard and drinkers received a fair measure. It is said that in some areas the Conner would wear leather breeches and pour a pint of ale on a wooden seat and sit on it. After half an hour he would get up—if his breeches suck to the seat the ale was impure with too much sugar and legal action followed!



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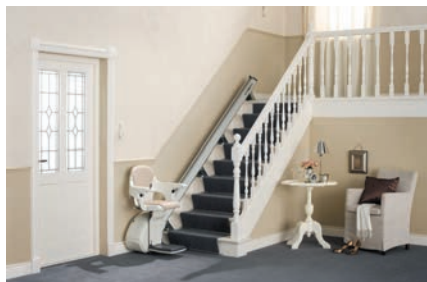
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Parasols and not forgetting fly screens. Castle Blinds will be able to help you every step of the way to ensure that you make the perfect choice for your home.

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beyond just the purchase of a product—their after sales service is second to none. Home visits are an essential part of the process and these can be booked at a convenient time for you—it is the perfect time for you to talk to one of the team and explain exactly what you are looking for. Rest assured, they are always fully prepared with brochures and samples for you to look at so that you make the right design choice for your home.

Castle Blinds prides itself on having a strong reputation for offering a complete service from product choice through to installation—their expert fitters will be on hand throughout to talk you through the process to ensure that the end product is nothing less than perfect. For your peace of mind there is also a 5 year guarantee on every product.



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★ In 1874, following the General Election, a mob ran riot through Gornal attacking the premises of two local pubs (the White Chimneys in the centre of Gornal Wood and the Chapel House Inn in Ruiton) as well as the home of a Mr Patterson in Ruiton Street. The reason for the unrest was the initial result of the election (won by Henry Brinsley Sheridan) which was declared null and void. Three men—Alexander Turner, William Roberts and James Taylor were all arrested although subsequently only Roberts was found guilty. He was sentenced to five months imprisonment with hard labour.

★ Magistrates at Brierley Hill Police Court were asked in September 1854 to believe a most unlikely story when Eli Cook appeared before them. Cook was charged with stealing a goose belonging to a Mr Wilkinson. He was seen at the pond where the goose was kept—but then Wilkinson's son realised that the bird had disappeared. He followed Cook to Gornal where the suspected thief was apprehended. The goose was found upon him hidden in his coat, but he denied that he had stolen the bird. He said that he had borrowed the coat he was wearing from an unknown friend and that he had found the goose in it. The magistrates were not impressed with this somewhat unlikely tale and committed Cook to the next Quarter Sessions.





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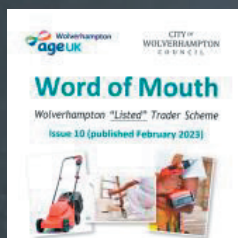
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it's a fact!

- ★ An interesting tale is told of the acquisition of the first organ to be installed in the Providence Chapel in Coseley. Opened in 1809, the Chapel did not possess an organ until 1845 when a suitable instrument was offered at auction. One of the deacons—Zachariah Mason—was asked to attend the auction and bid for it. Mason was a collier and went straight from work to the auction without changing his clothes first and the auctioneer showed some concern when this dirty, somewhat unkempt individual started bidding. Indeed, he even asked Mason whether he could really afford the bids that he was making (to which Mason responded that he could). Indeed, eventually, Mason's last bid proved successful and the auctioneer was quick to announce that the organ had been "*sold to the black-faced collier*".
- ★ Back in the 1920s amateur football teams in the Black Country could bank on tremendous support from the local population. In 1921, for example, the semi-final of the Dudley Guest Hospital Cup between Lower Gornal Athletic and Tividale Athletic attracted a crowd of over 3000 spectators. Gornal won 3-0 and their team line-up was: Dean, Tight, A. Cooper, L. Hickman, E. Hickman, A. Jones, L. Cooper, A. Kinnear, W. Woodall, J. Jones and A. Moss.
- ★ Edward Brooks and Edward Wise, parish constables in Sedgley, appeared in court charged with taking fees for executing distress warrants in excess of the amount allowed. The court heard that the complainant's wife had agreed the extra money and so the constables were purely warned of their future conduct.

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THE GEOFF HILL CHARITABLE TRUST Registered Charity No. 1067258

The Geoff Hill Charitable Trust was founded on 18th March 1997 by the late Geoff Hill MBE. The object of the charity is to support or promote such charitable purposes to the discretion of the trustees. The grants are limited to within the local area of the West Midlands. Unfortunately, it was decided that to maximise assistance to local schools, hospices, hospitals, scout/guide groups, sports clubs and other charities or organisations that no donation will be made to individuals.

Geoff started his charity from personal savings and always felt that the success of his business—the Geoff Hill Store in Amblecote Stourbridge - was thanks to his loyal customers. In gratitude, he felt that he wanted to give something back to the community! Therefore, the Charitable Trust was founded to help needy charities and causes in the local area.



To increase funds Geoff organised large raffles and dances at the Stourbridge Town Hall and other local venues. He was awarded the MBE by Prince Charles (now King Charles) in October 2004 in recognition of his work (our photo (left) shows a very proud Geoff wearing his MBE together with his wife Sue).

To date The Geoff Hill Charitable Trust has helped 1,827 different causes and has donated just under £1 million. The charity has gone from strength to strength. All donations are carefully monitored and hopefully go a long way to improving the quality of life for many people within the area that we live. The charity helps hundreds of organisations each year, giving grants from a few hundred pounds to a few thousand.

Any group, charity or good cause in need of funding can write to: The Geoff Hill Charitable Trust, 7 High Street, Amblecote, DY8 4DE. We would emphasise that we are unable to give to private individuals.

The Geoff Hill Charitable Trust is proud to continue the good work that Geoff Hill MBE started originally from his personal savings.

With thanks

Sue Hill

Zero Dry Time: No hassle carpet cleaning



Zero Dry Time specialise in DRY carpet and upholstery cleaning, hard floor cleaning and leather restoration.

It's carpet cleaning but not as you know it....

The 'on your hands and knees, scrubbing and carrying dirty water' is a thing of the past. With the advancements of new technology and products, Zero Dry Time have developed a robust cleaning system that will enable us to give you.... the customer, what you deserve when having your carpets cleaned.

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At Zero Dry Time we have developed our own range of products that have been tested to industry standards. All our products are child and pet friendly.

Some of these fantastic products are also now available as maintenance products for you to purchase and use within your home/business, keeping your carpets and upholstery fresh between cleans with 'UNBELIEVABLE RESULTS'.

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- **Tile and Hard Floor Maintainer** – keep your tiles, grout and wooden floors looking like new with this fantastic product.

These products range in price from £5 to £12.95 each with free delivery. We are also now proud stockists of unbelievable sanitising products for your home, office, and your car.

Please contact Chris and the team to order yours now and make the switch to making your busy lifestyle a lot easier!

Zero Dry Time was established in the local area 8 years ago and offers a free no obligation quote on all flooring and upholstery cleaning and restoration requirements. Call Chris in Kingswinford on 0800 180 4981

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Dry Carpet, Upholstery & Hard Floor Cleaners

"no soggy carpets or wet dog smell"

- ✓ **Spills & spots - gone**
- ✓ **Smells & odours - removed**
- ✓ **Deep cleans & lifts carpet pile - like new**

**4 great solutions for
your home**

- ✓ **Dry carpet cleaning**
- ✓ **Upholstery cleaning**
- ✓ **Hard floor cleaning**
- ✓ **Wooden floor cleaning**

**Get Main Room Cleaned
save 50%
on all further rooms
+ Free Stain Guard**



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OR WHATEVER by John Sparry

“Beware! It’s the ‘AbramMen’”

By 1403—Henry IV had won the Battle of Shrewsbury, although possibly hiding under the refectory table when the log-man came round for his money.—a religious house, St Mary of Bethlehem, founded in Bishopsgate, London, in 1247, had been converted to a home for the insane.

Those inmates considered not too out of order or control—of the ‘Abraham’ Ward—were allowed to go out begging in order to add a little more to their meagre diet.

As always, the rogues, and those known as ‘canting coves’ (whining thieves) thought ‘this could keep us in the manner to which we ought to be accustomed.’ Today, in order to save time they mainly use the phone.



“Ar tell you what, lads, we’ll pretend we’re maniacs—some of us won’t need to do much acting—an’ we’ll go around a-whining’ we’re from Bedlam.” (This was the corrupted pronunciation of Bethlehem, the previously mentioned hospital).

“An’ we’ll be sure to scare ‘em” - to be topical read scam—”an’ they’ll come across with the old spondulicks” (one wonders whether Henry IV was considering joining them).

And so the Abram’men pursued their dreaded vagabondage around England: ‘With a sigh like Tom O’ Bedlam’ wrote Will Shakespear in King Lear. The ‘Sham Abram Coves’ would have ensured that Ann Hathaway kept her cottage door bolts well-oiled.

**Due to my shaky handwriting,
for ‘Rover’ in the April issue
please read ‘Roller’ - the slang
for a Rolls Royce which
Mr Geoff Cookson could not
countenance.**

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!)

“DISGUSTING” FLOWER SHOWS

Back in 1907 the Annual Flower Shows at Sedgley and Gornal were branded “disgusting” by the local temperance society after both events were disrupted by drunken youths.

Although the Sedgley Show was held amidst thunderstorms it was reported that the beer tent was extremely busy and took over £80 (a very considerable sum in those days).

Over in Gornal a fortnight later—with better weather bringing out more crowds to the event—so many people were waiting impatiently to be served in the beer tent that the tap had to be knocked out of the barrels and buckets filled with beer to enable it to be served more quickly.

After the Shower it was reported that one youth had to be carried home drunk by his friends and that a party of young men arrived home so late that they were locked out of their houses and had to spend the night in a hay loft where they were found the following morning by the farmer.

The Temperance Society estimated that over a third of the visitors to the Gornal Show had no interest in the flowers on display but only saw the inside of the beer tent. Their anger was mainly directed at the Rev James Rooker, vicar of St James’ Church who was Chairman of the organising committee. They pointed out that as a magistrate as well as churchman he was in a position where he should do all in his power to ensure that such behaviour was not allowed to occur again. Not surprisingly the Society’s view was that this could best be achieved by banning the sale of alcohol.



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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? Over the course of the next few months we will be providing the names and details of various local speakers. So, if you are a speaker and would like to be included free of charge in this feature, then please email your details together with a current photograph to Gail at villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk

MICHELE BIRCH

Michele offers a varied range of talks. She draws on her own family history by way of using family links and demonstrations of **Japanese gift wrapping techniques**—this is a popular talk towards Christmas time especially.

She also has a great interest in **poppies**—glass fantasy film demonstrations and an involvement in poppy displays. This is a highly popular talk towards November.

Another talk is **the power of colour and their affects on people suffering with mental health issues**. A further talk is **'Food and Your Mood'** which looks at the effect of food on our mood and why it is so important to eat healthily.

As well as being a health and wellbeing tutor for adult education Michele is also a life coach offering talks on positive thinking, resilience, motivation and self-esteem. She also offers the opportunity to tailor her talks to cater for any given audience and is more than happy to talk to organisers about their requirements.

For availability, please contact Michele either by email at:

michelebirch6@gmail.com

or telephone on **0791 853 2284**

BARRY PICKEN

Barry has been giving talks to local clubs and societies for over 20 years and covers a variety of topics currently including:



'Red Flowers and a Bag of Old Bones' - the story of the Poppy and the Tomb of the Unknown Warrior

'The Habsbergs, the Hohenzollerns and the Romanovs - from obscurity to oblivion'

'They took their Lifeboat to the top of the mountain' - the Lynmouth Lifeboat January 1899

'Edith Cavell - heroine or spy'

'Railway wagon 132' - who were the three most important people to be carried in a goods wagon

All of the talks are given with a power point presentation

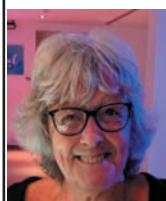
For availability, please talk to Barry

either by email at:

bpicken119@aol.com

or

Telephone **07940 743807**



KATE ROUND : Kate has been doing talks to local clubs and societies for over 15 years, on behalf of Dudley Museums Service, and is based at the iconic Red House Glass Cone, the home of Stuart Crystal. Kate talks about the glass industry, the artistry, and legacy of cut-glass, and the lives and skills of the people who made it.

Check out her website <https://kateround.com/>

All of her talks are listed with a description of content and all are presented with slides. For availability, please talk to Kate either by email at:

kateround.round@gmail.com or telephone on **07968 396679**

JOHN HOMER - A BLACK COUNTRY BLOKE!

For many years he 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

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**



ALAN PEACE: Alan began his working life as a printer but has also been a youth worker and a professional climbing instructor. His high altitude climbing career has sent him around the world to places such as The Alps, Russia, Argentina, Norway, Italy, Morocco, Tanzania and Mongolia. He spent 10 years as a volunteer lorry driver with the German Red Cross delivering humanitarian aid throughout Eastern Europe and for 27 years was the Senior Warden of the Himley Park estate near Dudley. He is an Ambassador and volunteer fundraiser for Cancer Research UK and a local councillor and in his spare time he skips a 70 foot narrowboat running day trips.

Himley Hall—Past, Present and Future—Concentrating mainly upon the social history of the Himley estate and the many notable people who have visited.

Never Work with Children or Animals (by the man who has done both and survived!) - an anecdotal and light-hearted look at some of the comical situations Alan has found himself in during 40 years of working with both children and animals!

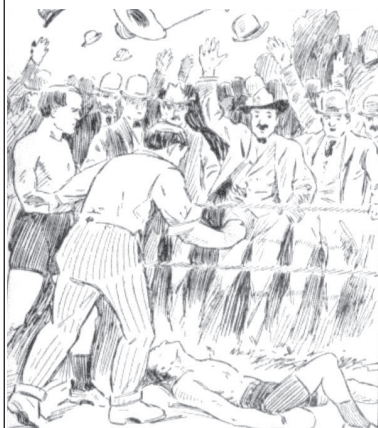
The 1000km Stroll—backpacking the South West Coast Path—Back in May 2021 Alan travelled to Minehead in Somerset to begin backpacking the 1000km long South West Coast Path in aid of Cancer Research.—an eight week expedition and the follow-up expedition the reverse way in 2022.

For a full list of talks and availability please contact Alan on 07791 900445 or email him at alrobpeace@btinternet.com

MOTHER-IN LAW THREAT SUCCEEDS!

Gornal has long had a reputation for producing quality boxers and one of the very best was Jem Hall.

Although he had beaten several useful opponents it was only in 1836 when he had defeated John 'One-Eyed Wonder' Bate that he was recognised as Gornal's Champion.



His next fight was against Charley Hedge, who was known as the 'Brierley Hill Pet'. For a stake of £20 (winner takes all) the two men faced each other near Kinver. A contemporary account paints a pretty grim picture of the two boxers: *"Jem the Gornal champion was no oil painting and had no pretensions to pulchritude but when he smiled it did not detract from his appearance. Charley from Brierley Hill was grim visaged and above his eyes was a double thickness of bone strong enough to protect them from any bare fisted attack. If Jem had been in the rear rank when good looks were handed out then Charley had not been on the parade ground at all."*

The fight started with Jem Hall as odds on favourite and very soon it was clear that he had the upper hand, inflicting considerable punishment on his slower opponent. Then, Hall was caught on the ropes and took a number of telling blows that seemed to signal the beginning of the end for the Gornal man.

One of the most vociferous on-lookers at the side of the ring was Jem Hall's wife, Maria. She started cursing her husband and even threatened to move her mother into their house unless he put more effort into winning. Whilst this caused great hilarity amongst the rest of the crowd who heard such a potent threat it certainly seemed to work and slowly but surely Hall gained the upper hand and in the 49th round his opponent finally had no alternative but to succumb to his stronger and more powerful adversary.

Not surprisingly Maria Hall forgave her husband's earlier lapse and even withdrew her threat of moving her mother into the marital home.

In the years after this epic battle Jem Hall and Charley Hedge became good friends and they even became in-laws when Jem's son married Charley's daughter. Although Jem Hall had a number of other bouts after this epic, Charley Hedge retired from competitive prize fighting after his defeat.

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BRAINTEASERS ANSWERS

1. (i) Need and Knead
(ii) Mare and Mayor
(iii) Hungary and Hungry
(iv) File and Phial
(v) Ode and Owed
2. Neither. Six and seven make 13 not 14!
3. 24. It is actually a lot more simple than it at first seems. Each hen lays an egg and a half and therefore each lays four eggs in six days—and six hens would therefore lay 24 eggs in six days.
4. The answer is 10 minutes and 24 seconds—but the explanation would take a page in itself so you'll have to take our word for it!
5. A: Painless operation
B: No pain, no gain
6. The odds are 1 in 2 or 50%. The number showing on the first die is not of consequence. Whether it is even or odd the chance of it being the opposite on the second die (thereby ensuring the total is odd) is still just 1 in 2.



**WATCH OUT FOR MORE
BRAINTEASERS NEXT MONTH**

COMPETITION WINNERS

The answer to our Wordsearch Competition in the **APRIL** edition was **PAINTS** which was misspelt. The two lucky winners who each receive a **£50.00 B&Q GIFT VOUCHER** are:

MRS J. BRITTON of **BILSTON** and
RACHEL JEWELS of **KINVER**

You can find this month's competition on page 30.

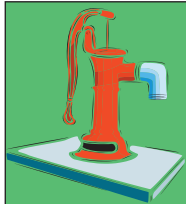
PLEASE NOTE: Only one entry per person per month is allowed – multiple entries will be disqualified. Winners are chosen at random from all correct entries received by the closing date.

**WIN
TWO
TICKETS TO**

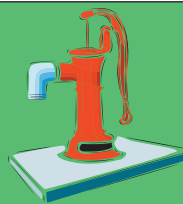


Courtesy of **THE ROBIN** in Bilston, we have two tickets up for grabs for one lucky winner. All you have to do to be entered is to send your **NAME, ADDRESS, TELEPHONE NUMBER** and **EMAIL ADDRESS** to villagevoice@hotmail.co.uk or write to us at The Robin Tickets, Forge House, 50 Redhall Road, Dudley DY3 2NL. The lucky winner will be drawn on **Friday 22nd May 2026 – GOOD LUCK!**

Congratulations to **MIKE BULLOCK** of **KINGSWINFORD** who was the lucky winner of the two tickets on offer in the **APRIL 2026** edition.



The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



Despite the closure of the national Townswomen's Guild organisation, Sedgley TG is continuing, as it has done for over 70 years in Sedgley, to provide fun and friendship for women, the chance to learn new skills and to improve lives. Lots of events and activities to get involved with - just take a look at the poster (below).

WHAT HAPPENS AT SEDGLEY TG?

- Meet others and make new friends
- Speaker or entertainment event (every 3rd Monday 7.15pm SCC*)
- Lots of enjoyable activity groups to join:
craft & games group (every Wednesday 2pm SCC*)
TG Singers choir (most Mondays 7pm SCC*)
walking & strolling groups
lunch & supper clubs
book club
theatre trips
film club
Orange Cafes
open gardens (summer)
- Join in with local, national and international projects and campaigns to help others
- Day trips & enjoyable outings
- One-off special events
- Monthly newsletter available for all members



Visitors and new members always welcome.
For more information, please contact Karen on

07473885197 or karenm_moore@sky.com

*Sedgley Community Centre
Ladies Walk, Sedgley, Dudley DY3 3UA

www.facebook.com/SedgleyEVETG

Join us to celebrate
120 Years of Tipton Library



Tipton's Edwardian Architect: the Life and Times of George Harry Wenyon
An Illustrated Talk by Keith Hodgkins

PLUS



Singer
Fran Dwane

FREE ENTRY
30 May | 10.30am
Victoria Road
Tipton
DY4 8SR



Supported by The Friends of Tipton Library

St James the Great Lower Gornal

COFFEE MORNING

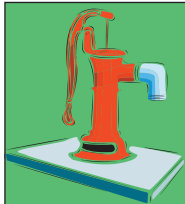
SATURDAY 16TH MAY 2026

10 AM - 12 NOON

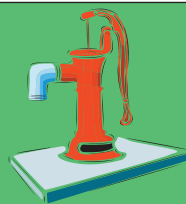
MEMORIAL HALL

LOWER GORNAL DY3 2PE

**COFFEE, TEA &
HOMEBAKED CAKES
RAFFLE**



The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton PARISH PUMP



Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group
For more information please contact the History Group on tlhistorygroup@outlook.com



Organised by Tipton Town Libraries Local History Group

BLACK COUNTRY LOCAL HISTORY FAYRE

Saturday 6th June 2026

10 a.m. – 3 p.m.

TIPTON SPORTS ACADEMY & SOCIAL CLUB
Wednesbury Oak Road, Tipton, DY4 0BS

**125 Years of the
Tipton & Coseley
Building Society**



**Unseen School Photos
of Tipton Green
Junior School**

Meet the Tipton Harriers

**Exhibition by Award
Winning Nigel Martin**

**Warley Model
Railway Club**

**Community
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*Visitors welcome
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*Do you prefer to do
handicrafts or
play board and
card games?*

Wednesday 2-4pm starting 22.4.26

**Sedgley Community Centre,
Ladies Walk, DY3 3U**

Contact 07473885197 for more details.

knit & natter

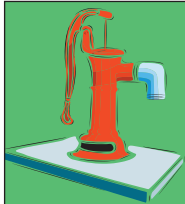
at Sedgley Community Centre
10am -12 noon every 3rd Saturday
at the Coffee Morning.
FREE ENTRY ALL WELCOME

THE NEXT PARISH PUMP WILL
BE IN THE **JUNE 2026**
EDITION AND THE
COPY DEADLINE IS

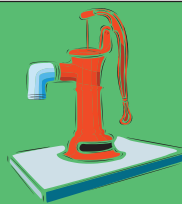
Monday, 18th May 2026.

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



TG SINGERS



make new friends
do something healthy
learn new skills
be part of a team
entertain others
ENJOY YOURSELF!

A Sedgley-based choir for all ladies in the local area. Only £3 a session (only £2 for TG members of any guild). The songs performed are a lively mixture of old and new. New singers are always welcome to join the choir — sheet music will be provided, there is no audition and everyone is helpful and friendly.

The TG Singers meet on the first, second and fourth (+ fifth) Monday evenings of each month at 7.00pm in Sedgley Community Centre DY3 3UA.

For more information contact: 07473885197 karenm.moore@sky.com
<https://www.facebook.com/TGSingersSedgley>



ST JAMES THE GREAT LOWER GORNAL

SUMMER FAYRE

Saturday 6th June
2pm - 4pm

MEMORIAL HALL DY3 2PE

FREE ENTRY

JOIN US FOR LOTS OF FUN!

- refreshments •
- bake-a-cake competition •
- tombola •
- raffle •
- stalls •



KNIT & NATTER

10.30am Saturday 1st June



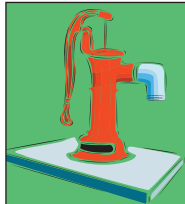
ALL WELCOME

St Chad's Church Hall
Oak Street, Coseley WV14 9TA

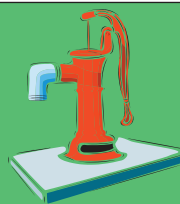
FRIENDS OF SEDGLEY BEACON

are meeting on
Wednesday 13th
May at 7.00pm at
the Beacon Tower,
to discuss
renovation works
on the Tower and
improvements to
Sedgley Beacon.





The Sedgley, Gornal, Coseley & Tipton **PARISH PUMP**



SEDGLEY LADIES FRIENDSHIP GROUP

(formerly known as Sedgley
Morning Townswomen's
Guild) meet at **Beacon
Centre for the Blind,**

Wolverhampton Road East, WV4 6AZ on
the first Thursday of the month at
10.00am to 12.00 noon.

At our June 4th meeting we are looking
forward to welcoming to the group a local
flower arranger.

All are welcome—Remember that your
first visit is free.

Gaynor Ormerod

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...

14th May—'Dublin & The Wicklow
Mountains' by speaker Howard Drury

21st May—'John Wesley—the Man
who saved England'
by speaker Chris Pearce

28th May—**HALF TERM**

4th June—**Quiz**

11th June—**Video presentation—
Dublin & Wicklow Mountains**
by speaker Howard Drury

18th June—**Skittles**

25th June—**The Jewellery Quarter Past
and Present** by speaker Andy Munro

2nd July—**The Sweet Life of Bournville**
by speaker Bob Booth

New Members are always welcome
and the first two sessions are free.
For further information, please contact

Stuart Lawley
on **01902 882973**

Kerry's Pink Party

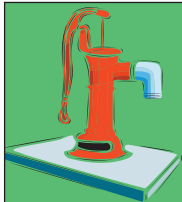
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Saturday 23rd May
2pm St Chad's, Coseley
Cream Tea & Entertainment

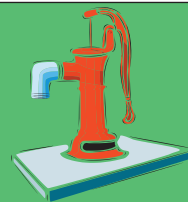
PINK sales table,
PINK crafts & raffle.

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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...

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

11 June—**David Bartlett**—**Black Country Tales.**

9 July—**Andrew French**—**The Beatles.**

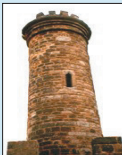
13 August—**Annual Club Quiz** with quizmaster **Allen Round**

10 September—Annual General Meeting
8 October—**Bingo**

and 12 November—**Jack Williams**—**Dudley Zoo**

10 December—Christmas Lunch with entertainment by **Holly Reynolds**

Further details can be obtained by emailing
dudleyprobus@gmail.com



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 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 and inventor James Watt.

THURSDAY 17TH JUNE – 7:00 pm

Visit or walk—TBA

THURSDAY 8TH OCTOBER – 7:00 pm

‘Beers & Breweries of the Black Country’ -
a presentation by Keith Hodgkins

**Visitors are always welcome
Individual talks—£2.00**

**St Andrew’s Church,
27 Bilston Street, Sedgley
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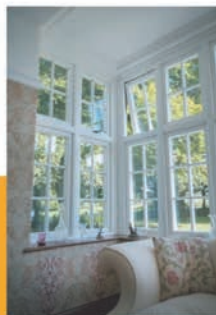
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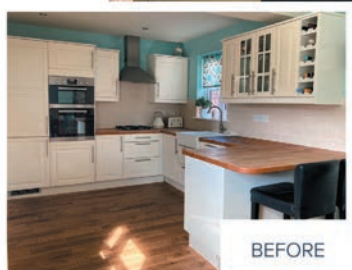


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