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February / March 2024

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Willenhall Life

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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the February/March, issue of Willenhall Life.

I'm writing this in early January, so the New Year, New Me thing is still going well.

This year I turn 59, so I'm not yet knocking on the door of the big 6-0, but I'm at least walking down the path.

Like many men of my age, I've gained a few pounds over the years, and in my adult life, apart from a month, here and there, I've regularly consumed a fair amount of alcohol.

I've been a member of the local gym for about 10 years, but you'd never know as my calorie intake has far exceeded the amount I've burnt off on the treadmill and rowing machine, so it's all been a bit pointless.

I'm also a bit fed up with downing a couple of paracetamol every morning, after I've had too many whiskies the night before.

On top of all that, I'd really like to get out and do more; walk up hills, visit stately homes etc, but the demon drink makes me so lethargic, that on a weekend, half the time, I'm too hungover to get moving.

So...this year I want to break that cycle and start living a bit healthier.

If we all did this, things would be a lot better for the NHS, which in itself, is a good reason.

Of course, when you read this, it'll be three or four weeks after the 1st January, but that doesn't mean you have to wait til next year. Start tomorrow, or better still, start today!

I've already noticed a difference. I feel livelier, more focussed and my eyesight has definitely improved – and that's after just 8 days.

Let's see if I can keep it up. Progress report in the next issue.

I hope you enjoy and appreciate this magazine. I couldn't do it without the invaluable support of our advertisers. Please have a look at their adverts and if you do purchase anything from them, PLEASE TELL THEM YOU SAW THE ADVERT IN WILLENHALL LIFE!

The next issue will cover April and May and will be out on 22nd March so if you want to be in it, please contact me by 1st March.

Enjoy your read!

Simon



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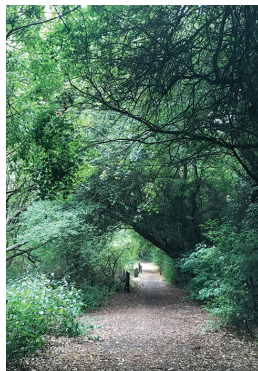
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Walsall Council Receives £75k Veolia Grant for Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve

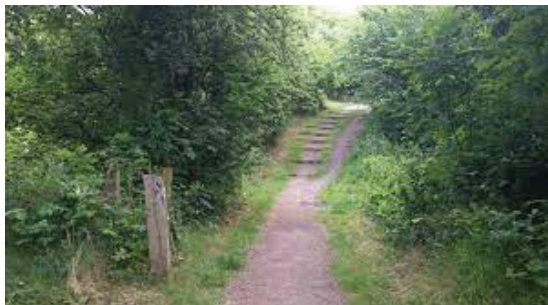
Walsall Council has recently been awarded a grant of £75,000 from the prestigious Veolia foundation. This grant will be used to enhance Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve, in the hope that it remains a thriving and biodiverse habitat for both flora and fauna.

As part of the funding, Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve will undergo a range of improvements, including the clearing of vegetation, upgrading path works, and enhancing the ponds. The reserve's entrance will be rejuvenated with the installation of a new notice board, ladder board sign, and a remarkable sculpture. Additionally, two new disabled-friendly entrance gates will be introduced, promoting inclusivity and accessibility.

In addition to the Veolia grant, a smaller grant has also been secured. Walsall Council has been awarded £2,059 from the Tree Council's Branching Out Fund for planting trees and hedgerows around the site. These additions will not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also bolster the ecological value of the reserve.



Councillor Gary Flint, Portfolio Holder for Wellbeing, Leisure and Public Spaces at Walsall Council, said, "The grants received are a testament to our commitment to safeguarding and enhancing the natural heritage of Walsall. Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve is a cherished treasure that not only supports a rich diversity of plant and animal life but also provides a tranquil space for local residents and visitors alike.



"The enhancements enabled by the Veolia grant, coupled with the support from the Tree Council, signify an exciting future for Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve. Walsall Council looks forward to continuing its efforts in promoting biodiversity and preserving this invaluable ecological gem for generations to come."

Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve is a wetland site located in the borough of Walsall, West Midlands, UK. The reserve is managed by Walsall Council and supported by local volunteers. It serves as an important refuge for various plant and animal species, contributing to the region's ecological diversity.

- Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve, nestled in the heart of Walsall, is a precious wetland site that showcases the region's natural beauty. The reserve's historical significance dates back to the last ice age, where the land was shaped by the melting glaciers, resulting in vast wildflower grasslands, marshes, and ponds.
- Once a quarry for sand and gravel, as well as a coal and clay mining location in the 19th century, Fibbersley Local Nature Reserve now features disused railway lines, ponds, and flooded quarry pits. This diverse landscape plays host to an array of plant species, including celery-leaved buttercup, fool's-watercress, and yellow iris.
- The reserve provides a sanctuary for numerous amphibians, boasting a regionally significant population of great crested newts. The presence of herons, willow warblers, linnets, and yellowhammers add to the rich avian biodiversity, with The Friends of Fibbersley recording over 70 bird species in 2016 alone.



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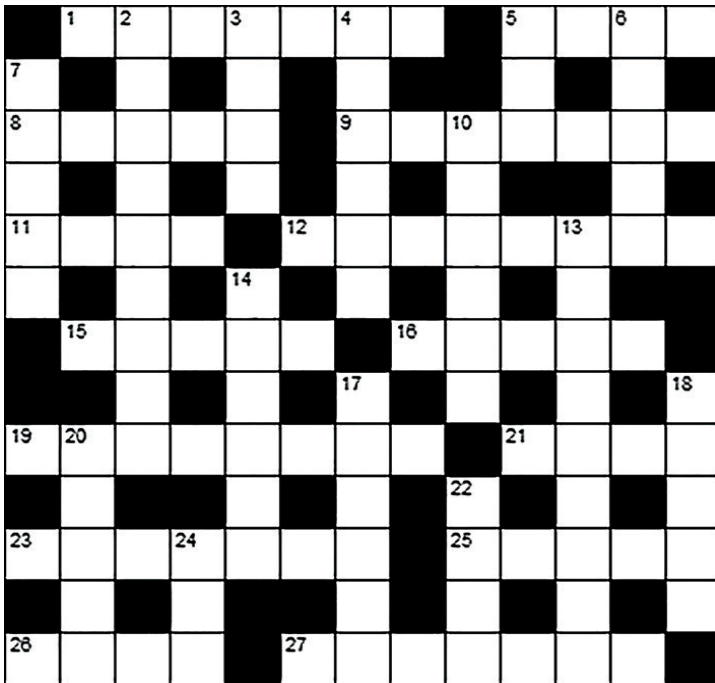
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Crossword

Please see answers on page 47



Across

- 1 Loss of hair (7)
- 5 Royal male (4)
- 8 Permit (5)
- 9 Musical performance (7)
- 11 Curved structure (4)
- 12 Noblewoman (8)
- 15 Backless seat (5)
- 16 Jack in a pack of cards (5)
- 19 Contemplate (spiritual) (8)
- 21 Egypt goddess (4)
- 23 Small onion (7)
- 25 Flat-bottomed boat (5)
- 26 Grasp, clutch (4)
- 27 Proof of payment (7)

Down

- 2 Assigned (9)
- 3 Daybreak (4)
- 4 Ordinary, unremarkable (6)
- 5 Ornamental fish (3)
- 6 Approaches (5)
- 7 Underwater detection device (5)
- 10 Slapstick circus performers (6)
- 13 Listen surreptitiously (9)
- 14 Mail service (6)
- 17 Effigy, maybe bronze or marble (6)
- 18 Benefit, advantage (5)
- 20 Volatile flammable liquid (5)
- 22 Adept, capable (4)
- 24 Chop, clip (3)

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Willenhall Based Will Writer Jim Stanistreet, from BensonWilliams, on The Strange Case of Parker V Felgate 1883



In the summer of 1882 Georgina Compton, who had been diagnosed with Bright's disease, attended a number of appointments with her solicitor, Mr Parker, to discuss her circumstances and instruct him to prepare a Will. Mr Parker prepared a draft and then went on holiday leaving a colleague, Mr Ponsford, to complete the Will based on the interviews held with Mrs Compton. Mrs Compton's health continued to decline and on 26 August she slipped into a coma. On 29 August the Will was brought to her bedside, and she was roused from her coma to ask a lady named Mary Ann Flack to sign the Will on her behalf, with two doctors acting as witnesses. On 2 September she died.

William Felgate, father of Mrs Compton, contested the Will on the basis that it had not been duly executed, she was not of sound mind when it was signed, and that she could not possibly understand or approve its content. Mr Felgate was in considerable financial trouble at the time and stood to gain if the Will was invalidated.

The solicitors defended the Will on the basis that Mrs Compton fully understood what she was doing when she gave her instructions to them, and she knew that the document being presented to her on 29 August was the Will she had employed them to write. One of the doctors acting as a witness had specifically asked the question "this is your Will, do you wish this lady (Mary Ann Flack) to sign it?" to which she had replied "yes".

The court's ruling on the matter is still relevant to this day. The Will was deemed to be valid on the basis that Mrs Compton had capacity when she gave her instructions to Mr Parker, the Will was in keeping with those instructions, and she knew that it was her Will even though she may no longer fully appreciate its exact terms.

It is more common than you may think for a person's cognitive powers to significantly decline in between giving instructions and a Will being prepared. Also, we are now at a point in time where we may be living longer, but lack of mental capacity in old age is increasingly becoming an issue as a result. The safest course of action when making a Will is always to seek professional advice first, particularly where questions of mental capacity or vulnerability are going to be concerned.

For more information you can call **07789 520910** or email info@bensonwilliams.co.uk.



Richard Parker

for West Midlands Mayor

I'm proud to be Labour's candidate for West Midlands Mayor. I left school at 16. I've since spent my career advising businesses across the West Midlands.

I understand the pride and aspirations of the people here who work hard and want to get on in life. But we've been let down by this chaotic Conservative government. They crashed the economy and now we are paying the price.

I'm not a politician, I'm a businessman. I'm not prepared to sit on the sidelines any more. I have a plan to give the West Midlands a fresh start.



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1309_24 Promoted by Charlotte Walker on behalf of Richard Parker both at Terry Duffy House, Thomas St, West Bromwich, B70 6NT.

News In Brief

Raising Funds for Acorns

Local Will Writer, Jim Stanistreet and friends, have been raising money for Acorns Children's Hospice for several years and have now reached the £20,000 mark.

Specific sponsored events have included a 100-mile cycle ride, the Birmingham half marathon, and an accumulated 1500 mile walk by a staff member in the space of a calendar year.

Along side that they have an ongoing initiative where we are matching any donations made by their clients which is not attached to any specific athletic challenge. Jim said, "This initiative will continue as it is working very well, and we will be putting new challenges in for the year ahead"

Vicki Rowles who is head of fund raising at Acorns, said, "We are so grateful for the support that local businesses like Benson Williams provide. £20,000 is such a wonderful amount, that will enable us to provide the vital specialist care to our children and families. Thank you to Jim and all of his customers."



Willenhall Station Letter

I've Just been reading the latest edition of Willenhall Life. The article on Willenhall's new station was very interesting, but the final paragraph states that Willenhall's original station was Willenhall Market Place, opened in 1872. This is incorrect, the original Willenhall station was opened with the Grand Junction railway in 1837.

The station was in Bilston Street. The platform was

on the left (Walsall) side of the bridge. On the right (Wolverhampton) side of the bridge on the opposite side of the railway were the goods shed and sidings.

Since closure in 1965 this area was occupied by Masons timber Yard. Willenhall Market Place station came later 1872 as stated in the article. There was also another goods yard attached to Market Place station. With the opening of Market Place station the original station was renamed Willenhall Bilston Street. I assume the new station is on the site of the old goods yard.

Just a little extra colour, In the 1950's my family used to holiday in Blackpool going from Willenhall Bilston Street by Train. As I was born in 1954, I don't have any personal recollections of this but my mother used to retell how because the platforms at Bilston Street were short and the train long the family got off the train and then had to wait for the train to draw forward to collect the pram from the guards/luggage section.

From Stephen Martin

Portobello Community (Methodist) Church

Coffee Mornings on Saturdays February 10, 24, March 9,23 10.00 a.m.-12.00p.m. Hot & Cold Drinks, Cakes & Toasted Teacakes on sale.

Friendship Club Wednesdays February 14, 28, March 13 2.00-4.00 p.m.

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Wilde West Ambitions

Wolverhampton Mixed Martial Arts (MMA) fighter Tim Wilde is targeting 'a big 2024' after his highlight reel knockout, despite having had spine surgery just 16 weeks before the bout.

Known as Tim 'The Experiment' Wilde, the Wednesfield man knocked out American, Mike Hamel with a devastating right hand in November and it was his first fight back from lumbar discectomy surgery, which involves shaving down the affected spine disks.

Magazine Editor Simon Archer interviewed Tim, while he was away training in Poland, to find out a bit more about his journey.

- **When did you first get into fighting and in what discipline?**

I started martial arts at the age of around 7/8. I first started training in Shotokan Karate at Seamless Tubes in Wednesfield, Wolverhampton.

- **What weight do you compete at?**

I currently compete at a contracted fight weight of 155lbs or 70.3kg which is lightweight in MMA.





- **Where (and where) do you train?
Days/times?**

I train 6 days a week, Monday to Saturday. Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday I train twice a day normally 2 x 2/3 hour sessions. Wednesday and Saturday I train once (harder intensity) and I rest on Sundays. Most of my sessions are in Birmingham with my team Renegade MMA.

- **Who trains you (current and previous)?**

I train with elite level MMA fighters like Leon Edwards, Fabian Edwards, Tom Breese and many more, including fellow black country fighter Jai Herbert. I use various coaches from striking to wrestling to strength and conditioning.

- **How many fights, wins, losses have you had?**

My current professional record is 17 wins 4 losses and 1 draw. My amateur record for MMA is 9 wins and 1 loss. So a total of 32 MMA fights.

- **What about titles?**

I have won British and European titles on regional shows at both amateur & professional. My goal now is to win a world title in a big promotion.

- **What was your proudest moment so far?**



My last fight was my USA debut and winning that fight by KO against a highly touted American wrestler is up there as one of them for sure!

- **Who is your Manager?**

I am managed by Nima Safapour from Moments Fighters Management.

- **Any advice for beginners?**

Enjoy the journey and work hard and remember you never stop learning

- **What's next for you?**

I am ranked 9th in the world in Bellator MMA and I want to win a world title in Bellator MMA or PFL MMA and currently I am waiting for an answer on which route I will be taking. The powers that be are currently deciding what the path is for me until I know I just keep focused and training hard.

- **How long do you plan to carry on competing?**

I have enough people around me and in my team who will tell me when I should call it a day. I feel great and having the best performances of my career so retiring isn't even in my mind.

- **Who would you like to thank?**

I would like to thank all my sponsors, my team, my manager and all my coaches. Also a big thank you to everyone who supports me and follows my journey.



Essington Harriers Running Club have won the England Athletics Regional Club of The Year Award

Essington Harriers Running Club are thrilled to have won the award presented by the UK sports governing body, England Athletics.

The award highlights Essington Harriers inclusive and welcoming approach to all runners; from beginners and those returning to running via the massively successful "Couch to Awesomeness" courses, through to long time (and long distance) runners who were looking for a club that offered a little bit more than a traditional running club.

Sarah (chairperson) and Robin (Vice chairperson) were at the awards in Stratford on Monday night representing the club.

"We are stunned to win the award, it is wonderful for our club to get this recognition. We have a really supportive and progressive committee backed by a core of LiRF (Leader in Running Fitness - an England Athletics qualification) run leaders, and an amazing bunch of dedicated runners who turn up every week to run the streets" - Robin Tinsley, vice chair.

England Athletics highlighted the customised C25K course that Essington Harriers provides "Couch To Awesomeness" and the supportive welfare structures in the club.



The next Couch To Awesomeness course will be starting in January 2024 and costs only £15 to join,

We welcome runners of all abilities, so if your new year resolution is to get fit through running, to return to running or if you are already running and are looking for an England Athletics affiliated running club that offers technical training and a supportive atmosphere, come and give us a try.

For more details the website is essingtonharriers.co.uk and they can be found on Facebook [facebook.com/essingtonharriers](https://www.facebook.com/essingtonharriers)



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On Wednesday February 5th 1964 The Rolling Stones played Willenhall Baths. A winter event organised by St Giles Youth Club when the baths were boarded over and became a dance and entertainment venue for the town. Teenagers were treated to a unique event on their doorstep unaware of the massive piece of music history about to be created.

Tales of Stones kissing and screaming still circulate around the town and the now famous unpaid fare in a Constable Taxi from a fleeing Mick Jagger saying "Save me from the gals!" in one door out of the other. Finishing the night with fish and chips from the Gem Chippy with extra batter bits.

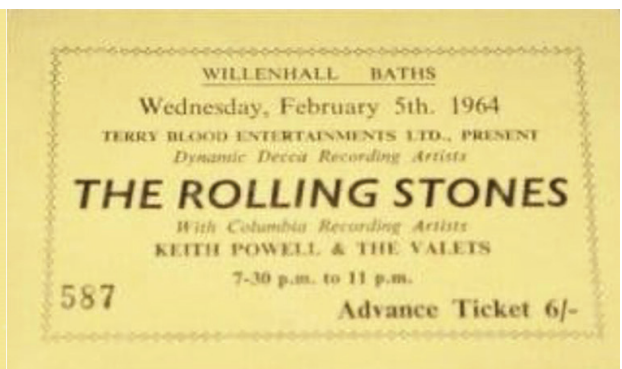
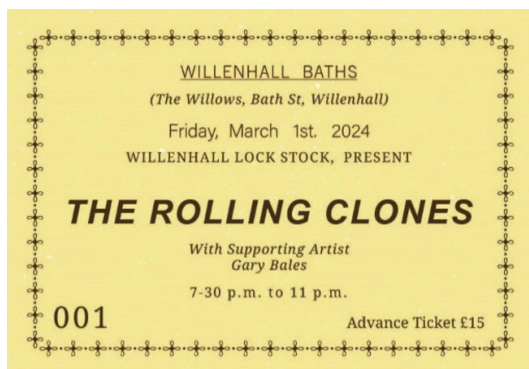
To celebrate this great event in Willenhall's local History, Willenhall Lock Stock are recreating the evening with international Stones Tribute the Rolling Clones. Advance tickets are just £15 with tables of 10 bookable at £150. Tickets and table bookings only available from Touch Down Vapes, Clarkes Lane, Willenhall.

The Willows, a great conference and events venue, still has the original stage, changing rooms and is the perfect venue to recreate this special evening in 1964. The popular drinks on the evening were probably Lemonade or Dandelion and Burdock however unlike 1964 the bar will be open this time around.

Willenhall Lock Stock is a not-for-profit group dedicated to bringing a smile to the town, promoting local music, venues, and artists. We also take our pop-up stage out on the road throughout the year to support good causes and provide a platform for local musicians. Our annual Music Festival Willenhall Lock Stock 2024 is on Sunday 1st September, this year, in Willenhall Memorial Park and early bird tickets will go on sale in March also from Touch Down Vapes.

Looking forward to a great 2024. You are the Music!

Luv Team Lock Stock xx





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Willenhall Rotary

The Rotary Club of Willenhall's 'Santa Sleigh' was out and about once more in the Willenhall area and further afield in the run-up to Christmas this year.

The sleigh is organised, on behalf of the Club, by twice Past President Simon Sims who lives in Willenhall. Simon says, "The Rotary Club has run the sleigh for a number of years now and, in terms of the amount of money we have raised for charity, this year was, by far, our most successful yet.

As well as our local collections in the whole of the Willenhall area the sleigh was taken to Essington and also further afield to Penkridge, and, on behalf of the Rotary Club, I would like to say a huge 'Thank you' to all those people who supported us this year. The money raised by local people will be donated back into local charities and worthy causes, but, as well as this we know what pleasure the sight of the sleigh brings to youngsters as it is seen on the streets."

"Following the success of the 'Santa Sleigh' the Rotary Club has made a further donation of £750 to town's "Bridging the Gap" making a total of £1250 to this local charity for the benefit of the people in Willenhall."

Come And Join Us!

The Rotary Club has been in existence in Willenhall since 1935 so, for 89 years, has been involved with local Willenhall people donating funds to local charities and worthy causes, both individually and collectively, as well as other service projects which have benefitted the town.

Like many organisations we are always on the lookout for people to join us. As well as our charitable work the Rotary Club meets in Willenhall on a regular basis for fellowship and to organise our charity collections and events.

Anyone who would like more information about our Club and who thinks that they would like to be involved in assisting in the charitable work we do in Willenhall, as well as the opportunity of fellowship and making new friends, is asked to contact our current President, Michael Entecott, on 01922 494713 or e-mail mentecott@gmail.com for further information.

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It's full steam ahead for Willenhall's new station, says Mayor Andy Street



West Midlands Mayor Andy Street says Willenhall residents can look forward to their new station being finished this year, as work progresses at pace on the site.

And Andy says the station represents just part of a 'transport revolution' that is improving how people get around the region, from new trains to a bus charter promising minimum services to passengers.

The new railway station, off Rose Hill, is now taking shape after Kier, a leading UK infrastructure group, took over the construction. Andy said: "It is so exciting to see real progress being made at the site of Willenhall's new station, which will have a transformational impact here - offering residents a fast passenger service to Wolverhampton, Walsall and Birmingham when it opens.

"Creating a world-class public transport system is an important part of my plan to achieve net zero by 2041, but projects like these stations will also make a huge difference for the communities they serve.

"It means businesses will be able to relocate along the line, bringing even more opportunities for local people. When we have the station open, along with car parks and transport links, I think they will become hubs for growth.

"What's more, by getting people out of their cars and onto good quality public transport we are tackling both congestion and the climate change emergency at the same time," he said.

The new station will give Willenhall people direct access to the rail network for the first time since the 1960s, offering two trains per hour, an hourly service between Walsall and Wolverhampton and an hourly service between Birmingham New Street and Wolverhampton.

Willenhall's original station, which was called Willenhall Market Place, first opened in 1872 but was closed to passengers in 1931. It closed entirely in 1965, under the 'Beeching' cuts.

The new station now being built will have two platforms, big enough to accommodate six-carriage trains, as well a pedestrian footbridge, stairs, lifts, ticket machines and drop-off areas. There will also be a 150-space car park at Willenhall.



Innovative Schemes Are Just the Ticket for Bus Users



West Midlands Mayor Andy Street says a 'transport revolution' is improving how local people get around the region.

Andy Street says the region's bus network is on the road to a better future, thanks to innovative ideas that are driving up passenger numbers. Andy said: "Buses are the backbone of our public transport network, providing hundreds of thousands of people with vital services every single day.

"Passenger numbers on our buses are now above pre-pandemic levels, but we are leading the way in getting even more people to climb aboard – from providing 600,000 free tickets to creating a charter to make sure passengers get a great service."

Transport for West Midlands (TfWM) is offering thousands of people 'try-before-you-buy' bus tickets as part of a £19 million Government-

funded scheme to persuade more people to use the bus.

The incentive is being offered to employers to invite staff who travel by car to work to try the bus instead, meaning 600,000 free bus journeys.

Andy said: "This innovative idea is just one of many improvements that are revolutionising our buses, with cleaner zero-emission vehicles, bus priority measures on the new Sprint routes improving reliability, and some of the cheapest bus fares in the country."

Under the West Midlands Bus Passenger Charter, bus operators have also made a commitment to deliver a minimum standard of service.

Andy said: "The charter makes key commitments to improve safety and reassure passengers, including staff visibility at our bus stations and daily patrols by our Transport Safety Officers. "For example, the charter also includes for the first time a 'last bus promise', which means that if the last bus is cancelled or doesn't turn up, we'll refund your ticket or compensate a taxi home.

"This kind of innovative idea – along with new railway stations – is driving a real transport revolution here in the West Midlands."

Promoted by Max Hopfl, on behalf of Andy Street, both at 1-7 Langleys Road, Birmingham B29 6HR.



The new Bus Charter promises that if the last bus is cancelled or doesn't turn up, you can get a refund for your ticket or compensated for a taxi home.

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WEDNESDAY FRIENDS

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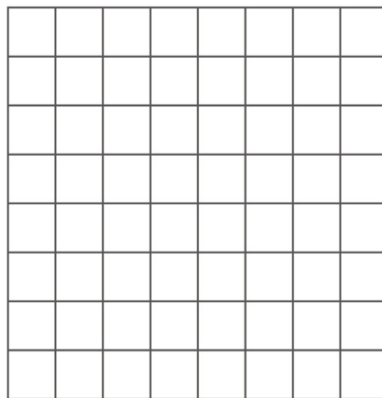
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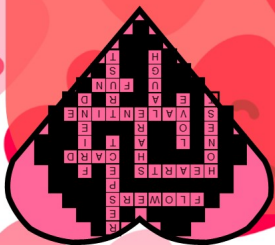
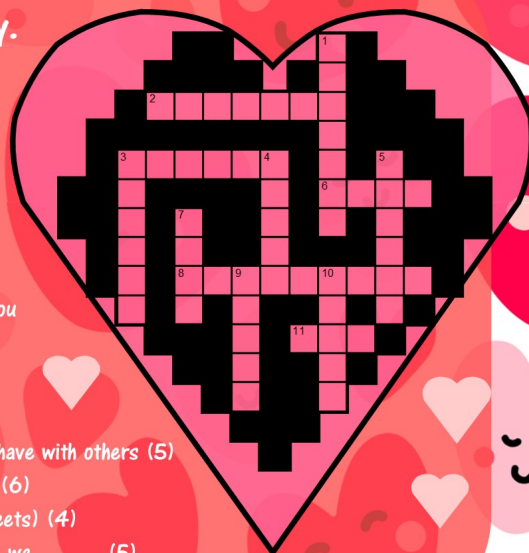
Can you solve our Valentine's Crossword? All the answers are linked to Valentine's Day.

Across

- 2 A bunch of _____ (7)
- 3 The Queen of _____ (6)
- 6 Did you send a Valentine's _____ (4)
- 8 February 14th is named after Saint _____ (9)
- 11 Enjoyable (3)

Down

- 1 If you are considerate of someone's feelings you _____ them. (7)
- 3 If you are truthful, you are _____ (6)



Crossword Answers

- 4 It's kind to _____ what we have with others (5)
- 5 Do you have a best _____? (6)
- 7 _____ Hearts (cute little sweets) (4)
- 9 If someone tells a funny joke we _____ (5)
- 10 To _____ someone is to have faith in them. (5)

WILLENHALL LEISURE & COMMUNITY **E-ACT**



Willenhall Leisure & Community aims to increase opportunities for the whole community to develop their learning, health, well-being and enjoyment. This is achieved through the organisation of adult learning courses, linking with local clubs/charities and hiring our facilities at evenings and weekends. Our success is based on our ability to create positive relationships with local people, allowing us to really be 'the centre of our community'.

- 🕒 5.00pm-10.00pm (Monday to Friday) / 9.00am-4.00pm (Saturday & Sunday)
- ☎ 01902 365 135
- ✉ Community.Walsall@E-ACT.org.uk
- 📍 Willenhall E-ACT Academy, Furzebank Way, Willenhall, WV12 4BD
- 📘 E-ACT Leisure & Community Walsall
- 🐦 Community_wha



Hiring our facilities: Looking for facility hire? We have a wide range of facilities on offer to suit your needs, whether it be hiring for a club, event or simply just a turn up and play.

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- ✓ Drama Theatre

Have a special request? Then please let us know! Please do not hesitate to contact us to discuss any specific needs you have regarding facility bookings. We are happy to tailor bookings to meet the needs of our customers. Block bookings are available.

Children's Parties: Running out of ideas on what to do for your child's party, then stress no more! We have a range of party packages available at cheap, affordable prices.



Partnership clubs/organisations: We strive to be at the centre of our community and can only achieve this through community partnerships.

Below are our current partnerships:

- No.1 Swim School
- Platinum Gymnastics
- Bowerm Swim School
- Seishin Shuko-kai Karate Club
- First In Last Out Swim School
- Satori Martial Arts
- Bilston Swimming Club
- Wednesbury Hockey Club
- LRM Dance & Performance
- Bloxwich Hockey Club
- Cresswell Wanderers FC
- The Playscheme
- Walsall Junior League Football
- Leagues4You Netball
- Citizens Advice
- Walsall Wizards Basketball
- Electric Model Car Club
- Active Black Country



Holiday Activities: Willenhall Leisure & Community works in partnership with The Playscheme to provide affordable activities during the holiday periods. Activities include a variety of sports, multi skills and arts & crafts. Please see www.theplayscheme.co.uk for more details.



SCHOOL CHRONICLES: THRILLS, TRIBUTE, AND TRIUMPHS

As the new academic year unfurled its wings, our school brimmed with anticipation and promise. Welcoming the dawn of this fresh term, we launched a series of engaging and memorable events, setting the tone for an exciting and vibrant year ahead.

FRIGHT NIGHT 2023



The annual Fright Night Event, themed around a spine-chilling Zombie Apocalypse, proved to be a colossal success. Transforming our school into an exhilarating and frightful realm, students eagerly engaged with the

hair-raising scare maze, navigating through eerie corridors teeming with ghoulish surprises. From blood-curdling encounters to heart-pounding moments.

The disco only added to the adrenaline-charged atmosphere, creating an unforgettable experience that quickly became a favourite among the student body. This spine-tingling event not only provided an escape from the ordinary but also unified the school community in a collective thrill of spine-tingling excitement and fun, marking it as a huge success.



HONOURING HEROES: A LEGACY REMEMBERED

The Remembrance Service, an annual cornerstone in our school's ethos, becomes a poignant tribute each year as the school community gathers in solemn reflection. This deeply revered occasion serves as a living testament to the courage and sacrifice of our country's heroes. Through emotive speeches, poignant musical renditions, and the dignified

laying of wreaths, the service not only pays homage but also offers an invaluable educational moment for students. It acts as a bridge between generations, connecting the youth with the profound significance of sacrifices made for our freedoms.



This ceremony stands not merely as a historical tribute but as a poignant reminder of the values these heroes embodied - values of courage, selflessness, and unity. It is a solemn yet empowering experience, instilling in the hearts of students a deep appreciation for the sacrifices made in the past to secure the peace and liberties we cherish today. The legacy of these heroes lives on through our collective memory, ensuring their bravery and dedication continue to inspire and guide us.

REDEFINING VICTORY: GIRLS FOOTBALL TOURNAMENT TRIUMPH

In the inaugural Girls Football Tournament, our team clinched an impressive fourth place overall in the borough, showcasing not only their sportsmanship and skill but also the growth and dedication of our girls' sports programs. This ground-breaking event celebrated athleticism and emphasized inclusivity and empowerment, setting a precedent for future sporting events.



Louis Theroux Interview

Esteemed documentary filmmaker Louis Theroux opens the lid on his latest triumphant TV return, and reveals how taking his work home almost killed him.

Louis Theroux has mastered the art of storytelling, introducing audiences to unique individuals and, in the process, allowing for profound self-exploration. Yet few understand the weight of such adventures and how taking these stories home nearly cost him everything.

Theroux reflects: "It's never as simple as just shutting down the camera and proceeding to the next assignment. The essence of documentary work goes deeper than that.

"Every encounter, every story – regardless of its duration – leaves an indelible mark on you. It's about recognising and internalising those shifts, understanding that each experience has, in subtle or profound ways, reshaped your perspective and arguably altered your narrative going forward."

For many, distinguishing between personal and professional spheres can sometimes prove to be a complex endeavour, and even for someone as intelligent and skilled as Theroux, the reality is no different.

In one memorable instance, he immersed himself in the world of America's most infamous White Aryan Resistance hate group, and admitted: "For that, the feeling of disquiet refused

to dissipate easily. Its grip remained steadfast and persistent."

Another instance – memorable for the wrong reasons – occurred when Theroux filmed one of his BBC Two specials called *Mothers on the Edge*, meeting women who have been admitted with a range of serious conditions – including depression, anxiety and psychosis. It had a profound effect on him.

"That one was testament to the silent battles many face, and it reminded me of the universality of human experience and emotion."

Theroux's encounters, with extremists, criminals and those on the fringes of society, often left him emotionally vulnerable.



"There were moments in the middle of the night when sleep would elude me, and other times when I could sleep but the result was tortuous," he candidly recalls. "Some experiences imprint themselves so profoundly that they're irreversible. If you find them hard to shake off, there is a real danger of them becoming an inseparable chapter of your personal narrative."

Yet Theroux refuses to let the journey keep him away from his passion. His latest interviews include boxer Anthony Joshua, Hollywood icon Dame Joan Collins, and whistleblowing activist Chelsea Manning.

Theroux says: "Working on new programmes was hugely gratifying. The guests were all absolute individuals in every way, and excellent in diverse ways, who have negotiated obstacles and grown to accomplish colossal feats.

"I am glad we are still talking..."

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Eddie Hughes MP

An update from your Member of Parliament

I'd like to wish you and your loved ones a Happy New Year! I hope you've had a fantastic start to 2024 and I also hope you had the opportunity over Christmas to spend time with your loved ones.

Last year I was delighted to secure £20m for Willenhall through the Levelling Up Fund. This funding is vital to breath new life into the town centre, so it was great news when Keepmoat Homes were announced as the delivery partner for phase one of the Willenhall Framework Plan.

Just before Christmas I met with the Keepmoat team to find out more about the exciting plans for Willenhall. I will keep you updated as progress is made.



It was an honour to join New Invention Junior School as they planted an oak tree to celebrate the coronation year of His Majesty the King.

The school is incredibly passionate about nature and the climate so headteacher, Alan Pearson, and pupils from the gardening club enjoyed planting the tree. Congratulations to the entire team for even getting recognition from Sir David Attenborough!



Willenhall Lockstock have already started their plans for Lockstock 2024. The team held their annual Willenhall Lockstock sponsors breakfast before Christmas and I know they already have some fantastic sponsors for this event.

If you are business owner or know a business that would be keen to sponsor the event of the year, please email my office so I can forward your details on to the Lockstock team.

We have some fantastic small businesses across Willenhall and I know many of you will be keen to grow your business in 2024. Walsall Council's Business Growth team are available to help you access funding and help overcome barriers.

Please email business@walsall.gov.uk to find out how their team can help your business.

I know community groups across Willenhall, Short Heath and New Invention are already planning community focused events for the year ahead. So I'm looking forward to seeing you around in 2024.

As always, please do not hesitate to get in touch with me if I can be of any help.

You can contact my office on **01922 477877** or email eddie.hughes@parliament.uk.

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Top Winter Walks from the National Trust



Wrap up warm and enjoy some of the best walking trails at a National Trust place near you this winter.

Adventure into the countryside for invigorating cold-weather walks and soak up the beauty of crisp landscapes, cool air, and glowing sunsets. Meander along frosty paths in historic gardens, jump over puddles in parklands, or blow away the cobwebs exploring the hills and valleys of some of our most spectacular places.

Winter is the best time to notice nature and wildlife around you on your walk. Look for pawprints in mud and snow, listen for crisp notes of bird song and spot woodland residents foraging in the silhouette of bare trees.

Warm up after your winter adventure in a National Trust café or tearoom. Thaw out with a hot drink, shrug off the cold with a hearty soup or simply enjoy a well-earned sweet treat.

Put a spring in your step during the colder months with top winter walking trails near you:

Shropshire

Attingham Park

Upon entering Attingham's gates, the views open across 200-year old parkland to the Shropshire hills and the impressive Regency mansion emerges, against silhouettes of cedar trees.

Historic trees cluster in woodland glades and the River Tern meanders through the parkland attracting an abundance of wildlife including herons, swans and geese.

There's a number of walks including the popular Mile Walk which is suitable for pushchairs and mobility trampers, which are available to hire.

Carding Mill Valley and the Long Mynd

With amazing views to be had on a variety of way-marked walks, the beautiful scenery at the Long Mynd is perfect for a bracing winter walk.

The Chalet Pavilion offers the perfect pitstop for a warming drink and tasty treat.

Comer Woods, Dudmaston Estate



Trails crisscross Comer Woods, including the Explorer Trail a multi-use circular trail which begins and ends at the car park. Designed for everyone, including walkers, runners, cyclists and adapted wheelchair users. Stop off halfway along the trail at the Scout Camp, it's a great place to pause for some outdoor games.

A little further along the route, there's a great spot for den building. Challenge your family to build the best woodland shelter before continuing on your way. Follow the tree stump stepping stone path as you head out for more adventures.

Staffordshire

Kinver Edge and the Rock Houses

Blow away the cobwebs with a bracing walk on Kinver Edge. Climb to the top of the hillfort and take in a late winter sun rise or early sunset. On crisp, clear days enjoy panoramic views across three counties, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Worcestershire.

Shugborough Estate

On clear, crisp days a stroll around the pleasure grounds is great for admiring the views across the whole estate. For frosty trees, the purple sheen of silver birch and wild deer walking through the mist, you can't beat a climb up to the Triumphal Arch and onto Satnall Hills. With the dieback of undergrowth, it's easier to spot some of the mammals which normally use it for cover.



West Midlands

Wightwick Manor and Gardens

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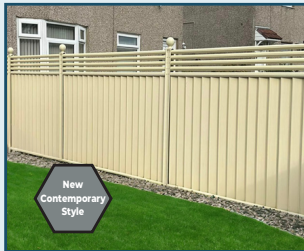
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Interview with Mitchell Lane



If you look at reels (videos) on social media, you may well have seen someone with a local accent, doing recipes for meals under a fiver.

Meals By Mitch have been a big hit with local people – and those further afield – as we all look to make a few savings as utilities, food and interest rates have increased massively over the past couple of years.

Magazine Editor, Simon Archer, caught up with Mitchell Lane to find out more about his newfound fame and success.

SA: So, we know you're local by the supermarket receipts you show us on the reels, but where are you from exactly?

ML: I grew up and spent most of my childhood in Bilston, which is probably where the strong black county accent comes from! I'm now living in Wednesfield with my partner and 3 kids.

SA: What schools did you attend?

ML: For my primary school I attended Holy Trinity in Bilston, then for my senior years I went to St Peters in Compton.

SA: Do you have another job?

ML: I still do the same day job which I've done for a number of years now; I work in a factory in Walsall which manufactures nuts & bolts. Of course the passion is with food though, so I try to be as involved with the cooking side of things as possible!

SA: So, are you a professional cook or chef? And where did you learn to cook?

ML: I'm not a professional chef no, I've always wanted to be involved with food... but life's got a funny way of working out sometimes. You get comfortable in a job and next thing you know you've got kids and your in your 30's. I'm just glad to be able to fulfil that love for food now and take part in food shows, TV and cooking workshops etc.

SA: What or who prompted you to start doing the reels?

ML: It started off during the pandemic lockdown of 2020; I was at home and I thought I'd show people how to still make some tasty food while cooking on a budget. Then one day someone on my TikTok asked me whether I could make a meal to feed 4 people for a fiver... then it went on from there.





SA: When did you realise the reels were becoming successful?

ML: It sounds a bit mad, but it still hasn't really sunk in how successful the reels have become. I'm still going about my day as normal, going to work, coming home, cooking tea etc. My day to day hasn't really changed all that much. I think when I got asked to do the BBC GoodFood show was a bit of an eye-opener into how successful things had become. It really hit home at that point.

SA: How many people watch the recipes?

ML: at this moment in time I couldn't even put a number on it! Some of the videos I've put up have racked up millions of views so it's really difficult to say. Still blown away by the outreach to be honest.

SA: Has there been one that's been a big hit?

ML: There's been a few that have done far better than I'd ever have expected... but the one that blew up beyond belief was the Christmas Dinner video I did in 2022. I basically showed people that you can make a fully loaded Christmas dinner to feed 6 people for 20 quid. I think it got over 6 million views and made Sky News and Newspapers. It was pretty incredible.

SA: I hear you've published a book? Tell me more about that...

ML: Getting to publish a book is probably one of my biggest achievements in life, not many people

can say they've published a book so it's all a bit surreal for me. It was published in April last year and got into the Sunday Times Bestseller lists... which still blows my mind.

SA: So, what next? Another book? TV? Film?

ML: My second book is due to be published on the 18th January... so not long to go! As for everything else, I just take it as it comes and don't plan ahead. I'm not going to get too ahead of myself. Whatever happens, happens. I'm happy with how things have gone up until this point so if anything else happens it is a complete bonus.

SA: Who's your favourite celebrity chef (other than Mitchell Lane)?

ML: Apart from myself, I've always quite liked Jamie Oliver... I always quite like Nigella (for obvious reasons).

SA: Which would be your favourite recipe?

ML: There's so many budget bangers out there... but one that really took my fancy was a roasted red pepper pasta I did towards the end of last year. Managed to pick up all of the ingredients for under a fiver and it was such a fresh tasting meal with a real depth of flavour from the roasted veggies.

SA: If you were on death row, what would be your final meal?

ML: I've always really loved my Caribbean food – would have to say a Curried Chicken, Rice & Peas, couple pieces of homemade fried chicken. Some flavours that would absolutely slap me silly!



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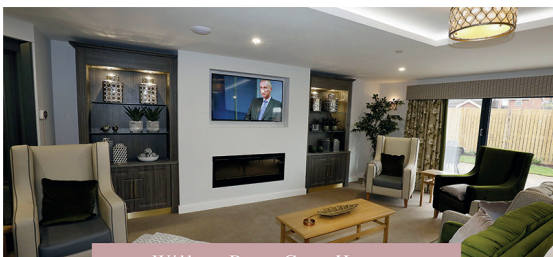
Our Manager

Shelly Trotman is the Manager of Willow Rose and is a dedicated nurse with over thirty years' experience in the care sector. She has previously worked with many large healthcare companies in the UK and so she brings a wealth of knowledge to her new role.

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Willenhall History

We have looked at several prominent names associated with the town so now it is time to look at Dr Richard Wilkes 1690-1760. His ancestors arrived in the middle of the 15th century after being granted land in Bentley by Humphrey Earl of Stafford they soon established themselves with the Levesons and the Lanes of Bentley.

Richard Wilkes the eldest of seven children of Richard and Lucretia Astley, her lineage dates back to before the Domesday Book (1086). Richard was educated at Trentham, Sutton in Warwickshire and entered St Johns College Cambridge on 13th March 1709 he gained a B.A. in 1713/14 and a M.A. in 1717.

He took Deacon's Orders and was ordained as Deacon in the parish of Stow by Chartley between Stafford and Uttoxeter. He preached once at St Peter's Church Wolverhampton. He eventually returned home to Willenhall, home, being a very large house built by his ancestors but had been severely damaged in the towns disastrous fire in 1659 and was rebuilt by his father, This grand building stood on the site of the present day Library/former Council House which became known as the Wilkes Mansion then later the Old Hall.



Upon the death of his father in 1741 he became head of the family. Despite never taking priests orders he was very involved in church life and became a trustee of the Chapel of Ease Estate and of the Willenhall Workhouse. Richard also owned a water works supplying water to parts of Wolverhampton using the 1st steam engine to raise any quantity of water making it either Thomas Savery's steam pump from the 17th

century or the new Thomas Newcomen's atmospheric engine of 1712. It stood on the site of what became The Chillington Iron Works later known as the Chillington Tool Company.

He became very interested in the health of the towns people, mostly the poor and began dispensing medicine to them, he did this with some success but took tuition in medical matters from a local saw bones of the district.



Richard Wilkes, M.D.

Richard was the author of several treatise on Dropsy, the treatment of Distemper in horned cattle and an essay on Smallpox in 1747. Richard had a great interest in historical and archaeology his correspondence with fellow workers in this field can be found in the William Salt Library at

Stafford, also there is some of his manuscript work on a history of Staffordshire.

Richard's first marriage was to Rachael Manlove at Abbots Bromley in 1725, receiving a generous fortune in the process, they had no children and she died in 1756. Shortly after he married Frances Bendish on 9th October the same year at St Michael and All Angels Tettenhall, Frances was the daughter of Sir John Wrottesley 4th Baronet and M.P. and widow of Heigham Bendish 1706-1746 of East Ham London they had one daughter Andry b 24th June 1734.

Richard Wilkes died on 20th March 1760 from a return of the gout in is stomach. His death was lamented by many from all aspects of his life.

Society News

March 12th - AGM

April 9th - Rogues, Villains and Thieves by Vanessa Morgan

May 14th - Music in the Movies by Siddique Hussain

By Liz Ince

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Old Hall People's Partnership	01922 474684
Pool Hayes Community Assoc	01902 368613
Sneyd Community Association	01922 710133
Willenhall CHART Comm Ctre.....	01902 368199

Emergency Services

Crime Stoppers (anonymous)	0800 555111
Electrical emergency.....	0800 328 1111
Flood line.....	0845 9881188
Gas emergency	0800 111 999
Police/Fire/Ambulance	999
Police (non emergency).....	101
Water emergency	0800 7834444

Health Organisations

Arthritis Action.....	0203 781 7120
Manor Hospital	01922 721172
New Cross Hospital (switchbrd)	01902 307999
NHS non-emergency number	111

Local Councillors

Short Heath

Poonam Gill.....	number not yet available
Josh Whitehouse.....	07917 072811
Amandeep Kaur Garcha	07517 561213

Willenhall South

Natalie Latham	number not yet available
Simran Cheema.....	07582 335443
Connor Horton.....	07380 334497

Willenhall North

Adam Hicken.....	07949 311432
Stacie Elson.....	07917 095237
Rob Larden	07927 580732

Chemists/Pharmacy

Acorn Pharmacy	01902 632129
Boots.....	01902 605255
Croft Medical Centre	01902 602999
8pm Chemists	01902 633310
Harding Pharmacy.....	01902 602755
J Docter Bentley	01902 605470
Lloyds The Square - N/Inv	01922 475098
Lloyds Coppice Farm	01922 712076
Portobello Pharmacy.....	01902 630081
Tesco Owen Rd	01902 489747
Vantage Pharmacy	01902 607070

Help Lines/Others

Citizens Advice Bureau	03444 111 444
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Childline.....	0800 1111
National Careers Service	0800 100900
National Domestic Violence	0808 2000 247
RSPCA	0300 1234 999
RSPB.....	0845 1200501
Samaritans	116 123

Places of Worship

Christ Apostolic Church	07495 515317
Emmanuel, Bentley	01902 633070
Furzebank Worship Centre	07758 083282
Guru Nanak Sikh Gurdwara.....	01902 605286
Holy Trinity, Short Heath	07765 826287
New Testament Church.....	01902 603885
Portobello Methodist.....	01902 411758
Salvation Army	01902 637732
Shri Guru Ravidass Temple, Somerford Place	01902 606285
Short Heath Methodist	01922 497748
St Anne's, Willenhall	01902 410564
St Andrews Church, Bentley	01902 607335
St Giles Church	01902 473273
St Mary's, RC Presbytery	01902 452841
St Stephen The Martyr	01902 737793

Schools

Barcroft Primary	01902 368132
Beacon Primary.....	01922 710874
Bentley West Primary	01922 720792
County Bridge Primary	01922 720718
Fibbersley Park Primary	01902 366220
Jane Lane School	01922 721161
King Charles Primary.....	01922 721368
Lodge Farm JMI	01902 368587
Lane Head Nursery	01902 368940
New Invention Infants	01922 710871
New Invention Juniors.....	01922 710376
Old Hall School	01902 368045
Pool Hayes Primary.....	01902 368144
Pool Hayes Arts & Community	01902 368147
Rosedale CE Infants	01902 368910
Short Heath Juniors.....	01902 368499
Shepwell School	01902 632719
Stowheath Primary	01902 558820
St Giles CE Primary.....	01902 368308
St Thomas More RC School	01902 368798
Willenhall E-ACT Academy	01902 368221
Woodlands Acad. of Learning	01922 710613

Libraries

Willenhall	01922 650771
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Crossword Answers

From page 10

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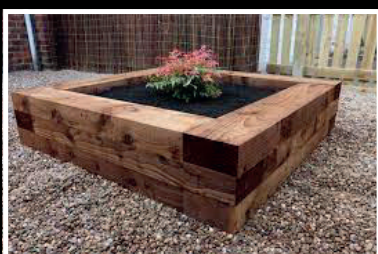
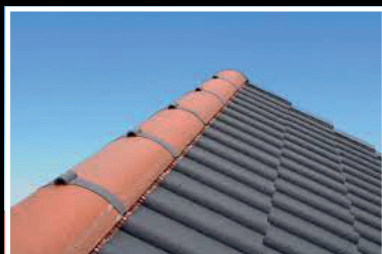
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