

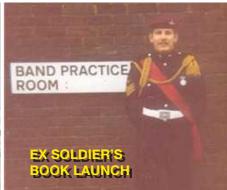
# Willenhall Life

October / November 2025

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# Willenhall Life

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## Willenhall Life

Part of West Midlands Magazines Ltd

Company No. 10452329 Registered office; 39 High Street, Wednesfield, Wolverhampton, WV11 1ST

#### PUBLISHER/EDITOR

Simon Archer Tel. 07534 603662

#### **EMAIL**

simon@westmindlandsmagazines.com

#### **WEBSITE**

www.westmidlandsmagazines.com

#### LETTERS/NOSTALGIA

Send to; Willenhall Life 16 Holberg Grove Wednesfield, WV11 3LE

Magazine design by **Nicola Burgess** hello@nicolaburgess.com

Printed by **Buxton Press Limited**Palace Road,
Buxton,
Derbyshire, SK17 6AE

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### Dear Reader,

Welcome to the Oct/Nov issue of Willenhall Life.

I must start off by saying a massive well done and thank you to all those who volunteer around this area.

You would be amazed at how many people do something for nothing (no pay and often very little praise) in our community.

I'm not even going to attempt to mention them all, but if you know one of them (school governors, litter pickers, music festival and event organisers, Rotary and Lions members, Scout and Guides leaders, neighbours who put peoples' bins out etc) maybe just tell them they're appreciated.

The world would be a lot worse off without them.

Anyway, I have some big news......drum roll.......l've launched a new website – WestMidsLife.com – which went live on 1st September. There are several reasons for doing this;

Firstly, I usually don't have enough space in the magazines to satisfy the demand from people who send in articles and features and I don't like disappointing them. Now, I can put their piece online or maybe put part of it in the magazine and rest on the website, as there's no limitations on space.

Secondly, more and more of my advertisers are asking for digital options and previously, I couldn't help them with that. Also, I can give them a far bigger audience – there are 6.8 million people in the West Midlands!

Finally, although people tell me they love the magazines, there will come a time (not yet!) when printed magazines are past their sell by date. I need something in place for when that day comes.

I do need to stress, it's not an online magazine, but there will be elements of what you enjoy in the magazines, on there.

There will also be an extensive 'What's On section' so if you have an event coming up that you'd like to promote. Please email me the details.

I hope you like it. Check it out now - WestMidsLife.com

This magazine doesn't exist 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 THE WILLENHALL LIFE MAGAZINE!

The next issue will cover December and January and will be out on 18th November so if you have a business to promote or have a story to share, please contact me by 1st November.

Enjoy your read,

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# Willenhall Man Crowned Winner of Britain's Best Pub Shed

Glen Gandy, 51, spent around two years and £20k, constructing the incredible DIY man-cave from scratch at his home in Willenhall.



The local tradesman built his Wolves-inspired bar in his garden, complete with DJ booth with decks and iacuzzi.

The boozer, called Cognitos, also boast a Space Invaders arcade machine, juke box, its own beer garden, a jacuzzi and even a toilet/shower room. Decked out in Wolverhampton Wanderers FC memorabilia, the footy-themed bar has now beat off 1,000 other entries to be named Pub Shed of the Year.



Glen says "I wanted to create a warm and welcoming space for family and friends to come and enjoy and make great memories."

Delighted dad-of-two Glen, who is a builder, said: "I was just honoured to get down to the final three really, I never expected to win at all."

"We had a big party to celebrate, which is exactly what this pub was made for in the first place. It feels brilliant to win - especially beating a Baggies fan. Funnily enough I know him and I plastered his home, so I'll be sure to give him a bit of stick."

Glen's stunning creation was built with the help of friends beginning in June 2023 after he started planning the project during lockdown.

After sourcing materials from local builders merchants, he then spent 24 months on the build, which also has umbrellas and benches outside along with a barbecue and seating area. The bar has signed Wolves shirts decorating the walls, a fridge fully-stocked with beer and a large screen TV.

He has since hosted many parties and get-togethers with friends and family - including his daughter's recent 18th birthday with more than 100 guests.

**Twofatblokes.co.uk** and Ngage Radio run the annual competition for beer-loving 'sheddies' to enter the converted Pub Shed of The Year.

Ashley Turner, from Two Fat Blokes Bar Sign Emporium, said: "This is our fifth year running the competition, the quality of the entries makes judging harder every year.

"The winner Cognitos is a well deserved first place, What an amazing pub feel."

The winner was announced live on Ngage Radio on August 23.

To read the full article and see more photos, visit www. westmidslife.com or use the QR Code.







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# Crossword

### 10 11 12 15 18 17 18 20 23 21 24 25 26 27

#### Please see answers on page 47

#### Across

- Motionless (6)
- Leftover (8)
- 8 Partiality (4)
- 10 Dried grape (6) 11 Pin, tack (4)
- Head of a monastery (5)
- 13 Highly contagious viral disease (7)
- 17 Stress (7)
- Lightweight wood (5) 19 Clasp, clench (4)
- Kitchen appliance (6)
- 25 Duty, function (4)
- 26 Camouflage (8)
- Alcove (6)

#### Down

- Deduct (8)
- Slightly open (4) Fresh, chilly (5)
- Disjoined, apart (7) 5 Norse god (4)
- Extreme scarcity of food (6)
- Hairdressing establishments (6)

Prickly plant with flowers (4)

- 14 Ice dancer (6) 15
- Lurch, reel (8) 16 Egotism, arrogance (7)
- 18 Insect with pincers (6)
- 20 Influence, authority (5)
- 22 Piece of paper, leaf (4)











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# Willenhall Based Will Writer Jim Stanistreet, from BensonWilliams, Shares a Few Thoughts on Lasting Powers of Attorney



Scary statistics but in The UK every three minutes a new case of dementia is diagnosed. The condition currently affects close to one million people. A fairly obvious comment but the numbers are rising dramatically as we are living longer. I was at an elderly care seminar recently where one of the speakers revealed that Stanford University have forecasted that the first person to live to age 200 is already alive today! (Don't shoot the messenger).

When somebody loses mental capacity, and no planning in place, things get very problematical. Somebody would have to apply to The Court of Protection to become a "Deputy" for them. This takes several months, the person who has lost capacity has no say over who is appointed, and with court and professional fees the process will typically cost between £1,500 and £2,000, followed by ongoing annual supervision and indemnity charges.

The Mental Capacity Act 2005 enables people to plan ahead for this by creating a "Lasting

Power of Attorney". This enables a person (the Donor) to appoint somebody else (an Attorney) to act on their behalf if they lose capacity. Three big advantages here are:

- 1. There are no time delays (the LPA would already be in place when the person loses capacity).
- 2. The Donor gets to choose the Attorney(s).
- **3.** The court and professional fees are a fraction of the costs stated above.

Lasting Powers of Attorney can be done in two separate formats. A "Property and Affairs" LPA enables attorneys to make financial decisions on your behalf. A "Health and Welfare" LPA enables attorneys to make medical and lifestyle decisions on your behalf. It would be entirely up to you whether you wanted to create one or both types of LPA (and if you did create both you don't need to appoint the same people on each one).

Making a Lasting Power of Attorney is inexpensive and brings peace of mind. Probably the most crucial point (and the question I am most asked by clients) is that it doesn't stop you handling your own affairs. The Mental Capacity Act is quite clear on this point. You have the right to make your own decisions for as long as you can. The LPA merely exists as back up so that, if and when you can't act for yourself, your attorneys can act for you.

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





# **News in Brief**



#### **Entrepreneur Shortlisted for Award**

Local Lady Charlotte Powell founder of The Saddle Lady shortlisted for top award celebrating female entrepreneurs-best small business at the UK Small Business Awards taking place December.

Charlotte started her business in 2022, she specialises in high quality hand crafted saddlery, luxury leather handbags and accessories.

Producing top workmanship in traditionally a male dominated industry, she has earned the trust of riders across the region.

The nomination reflects the hard work and support of customers, community and the horses that inspire her.

Being a keen rider herself she has had her own horse for 16 years so understands only too well, the requirements that are needed for the harmony of the horse and rider.

Her work is currently displayed at the Tower of London. She also made the saddles for Gladiator 2 film which was without doubt one of her proudest moments.

#### Portobello Methodist Church

Coffee Mornings Saturdays October 11, November 8 10.00-12.00 Hot & cold drinks, cakes and toasted teacakes on sale

Friendship Club Wednesdays October 1,15,29 November 12,26 2.00-4.00 3 games of bingo, refreshments and time to chat and make new friends

**Table Top sale and Coffee Morning Saturday, October 25 10.00-1.00** Various Stalls including bottle tombola, refreshments including Bacon Baps on sale.

Christmas Fayre and Coffee Morning Saturday, November 22 10.00-1.00 Gifts, hamper raffle, chocolate tombola and refreshments.





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# Rogue Patrol

### Preview of a New Book by Local Author Ray Palmer

It has been quite a long time ago now, but back in the summer of 1971, I was a Parachute Regiment soldier serving in Belfast.

I had left my hometown of Wolverhampton, in 1968, aged just 15, and now, my new home consisted of barracks in Aldershot.

In 1969, the unrest in Northern Ireland had prompted the



government to send troops there. It was only a matter of time that I would be sent there, but first, I had a12 month course in London to attend.

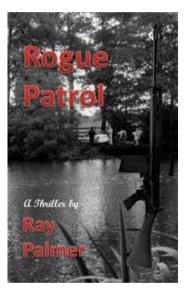
Belfast '71: I was one of the youngest soldiers in the unit, and after my constant grumbling of being stuck inside, my superiors finally agreed that



I could go out on an evening patrol. I was fed up of being cooped up in the mill (our lovely accommodation) and missing out on all the action, but the boss had my best interest at heart as I was the youngest, although I didn't agree with him.

Finally, on my very first patrol after about an hour just off the Falls Road, a shot was fired by the patrol commander. He gave a warning before he fired, and the round never hit the commander's target. That was the baptism of my first patrol, and now many years later that true incident has now inspired me to write the following story. I pondered on a 'What if'... What if a patrol made a serious error? ... What could happen if it was covered up? ... And what would happen when the police discover a body years later?

The story 'Roque Patrol' reflects such a scenario. resulting in a can of worms being opened of huge proportions and someone is trying to put a lid on it; suppressing it at all costs. The investigation spreads further afield, when the police in the UK mainland are dragged into it, culminating in a dramatic conclusion.



Full of twists and turns, I hope you the reader, will enjoy my mystery thriller.

I would like to acknowledge the following for the help they have given me in writing my novel. Maureen Harrison, Georgina Garbett, John Donnelly and Dee Palmer, former member of Jethro Tull.

That really explains a few things. It's not a war book, far from it. The ending comes as a total shock, I love twists at the end of thrillers, and this has a good one. The book does feature Wednesfield and New Cross Hospital and also Hilton Park service station.

# WILLOW Rose

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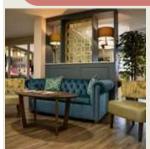
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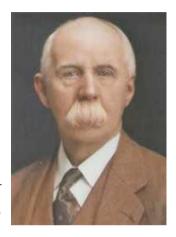


### **Charity Football Competition Notches up a Century**

by Steve Gordos

When industrialist John William Hunt came up with the idea of a football competition to raise funds for the local blind, little did he know it would be still going strong a century later.

The J W Hunt Cup has embarked on its centenary season, having raised nearly £450.000 for the Wolverhampton, **Dudley and Districts** Institution for the Blind which later became the Beacon Centre. His love of football and a desire to help the community led to the competition which bears his name





A superb trophy was commissioned with handles in the shape of crocodiles, the crocodile being the symbol Chillington had adopted to go on all its products.

Sadly, Hunt died on December 10, 1925, before the first J W Hunt Cup was staged. He was 82 when he died at his home. Maycroft, Ash Hill, Compton, Wolverhampton after being taken ill. He had retired as Chillington chairman three years earlier.

Out of respect, plans for the cup to be played in the 1925-6 season were shelved, so the inaugural meeting was held on Thursday, September 16, 1926, at the Molineux Hotel. The hotel building, now extended and housing the city's archives, has on it a blue plaque to mark the historic meeting.

Wolverhampton Wanderers were represented at that meeting and from the beginning have been stalwart supporters of the J W Hunt Cup. By coincidence the old blind institution was in Waterloo Road, just a short distance from Molineux.

The first 13 finals were staged at Molineux, beginning with a 2-0 win by Short Heath United over Cannon Iron in 1927. Short Heath won three more finals and

their total of four triumphs has never been equalled. Wolves continue to allow Molineux to be used and, in all, it has been the final venue on 56 occasions.

The J W Hunt Cup president Alex Hamil is a former top-flight ref. "It's a great competition," says Hamil, "and it may now be unique as it is open to clubs from different leagues." Hamil added: "We have had great support from the clubs and local companies over the years." Hamil was in 2013 awarded the MBE for services to football and the visually impaired.



A dinner will be held at Molineux, in September next year on the anniversary of the founding meeting and a book charting the history of the cup will be published. Written by committee men John Hughes and Steve Gordos, J W Hunt Cup Centenary will contain details and photos for every final as well as a history of the cup and the figures who have served it well. It also features the historic occasion in October, 2021, when a J W Hunt Cup first-round tie between Old Wulfrunians and Bloxwich side Lane Head saw an English record for the most kicks in a penalty shoot-out. There were 44, Old Wulfs winning it 19-18 after the game had ended 3-3.

Another great industrialist and benefactor, the late Sir Jack Hayward, once said of the cup "It's part of Wolverhampton's history."

He was spot on with that verdict and Alex Hamil adds: "We have a great committee who ensure the

competition runs smoothly." Clearly, the J W Hunt Cup's future is in safe hands.

To read the full article and to see more photos, visit www. westmidslife.com or use the QR Code.





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# From Willenhall Festivals to Local NHS Innovation: A Busy Summer at Home

During Summer Recess, I was able to spend less time in Westminster and much more time here in and around Willenhall. And what a fantastic way to bookend the summer starting with the brilliant New Invention Summer Fest at the Milestone Pub in July, and finishing with the truly amazing annual favourite Willenhall Lockstock on the very day before I headed back to Parliament. Our community spirit really is something special.

Events like these only happen because of dedicated organisers and the incredible army of volunteers who give their time. A huge heartfelt thank you and well done to everyone involved! Your hard work makes Willenhall the welcoming place it is.



As always, these were wonderful days of community, friendship, food, drink, and music. If there's ever a local event you'd like me to attend, please do get in touch. Meeting people at these gatherings is one of the absolute highlights of being your MP.

Before the general election, a huge priority raised with me was fixing our NHS. That's why I'm glad to see the Government's Plan for Change beginning to deliver real improvements. Nationally, there has been 7 million extra GP and primary care appointments, 100,000 more NHS



appointments every week, alongside round-theclock mental health support on NHS 111. Here in the West Midlands, waiting lists have fallen by 81,031, the lowest they've been in two years.

And great news came even closer to home. The Government has given high praise to New Cross Hospital in Wednesfield for its pioneering use of new technologies to transform patient care. I was delighted to see the Mayor of the West Midlands, Richard Parker, and Peter Kyle MP, Secretary of State for Science, Innovation and Technology, visit the hospital to see this innovation first-hand.

From Al note-taking that slashes admin times and boosts productivity, to online pre-op assessments that save patients valuable hours, and even robotic surgeries on the horizon, New Cross is leading the way nationally in healthcare innovation. It's fantastic to see Wolverhampton North East at the cutting edge, and exactly the kind of success we want to build on through the Green Innovation Corridor, better jobs, skills and opportunities local.

This recognition is a brilliant start, but there is much more to do. I'll continue working closely with New Cross and The Manor Hospitals to make sure patients in Wolverhampton and Willenhall get the healthcare and services they deserve.



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# New Website Launched for the West Midlands

At the start of September, a new website was launched with the aim of bringing the people of the West Midlands closer together.



WestMidsLife.com will have a comprehensive What's On section, along with pages on Food & Drink, Homes & Gardens, Finance, Education, Occasions, Entertainment, Health & Beauty, Business, Travel, News, Property, Charities and Motoring.

The news and articles will be about people, places and organisations from across the whole of the West Midlands, so advertisers will now have a potential audience of 6.8 million people.

Editor, Simon Archer says, "I do need to stress, it's not an online magazine, but there will be elements of what you enjoy in the magazines, on there. Although the magazines remain strong, this will take us on to the next level with a far greater reach, more flexibility and more options."

"The advantages of the new website are enormous, for instance, I usually don't have enough space in the magazines to satisfy the demand from people who send in articles and features and I don't like disappointing them. Now, I can put their piece online or maybe put part of it in the magazine

and rest on the website, as there's no limitations on space."

"Secondly, more and more of my advertisers are asking for digital options and previously, I couldn't help them with that. Also, I can give them a far bigger audience – there are 6.8 million people in the West Midlands!"

The 'What's On' section is designed so readers can see at a glance what events are taking place using the Calendar.

This saves people having to visit each venues' website to see what shows are on.

WestMidsLife.com is launching with a huge social media campaign and a series of radio adverts to drive visitors to the site.



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shields the insulation layer from rain, UV exposure, and damage, extending its lifespan. Certain renders even enhance fire resistance, offering added peace of mind. With texture and colour options ranging from traditional mineral to sleek silicone or brick-effect finishes, rendering also enables homeowners to tailor their property's curb appeal.



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Proper thermal insulation significantly slows heat transfer through walls, reducing heating bills in winter and cooling demands in summer. In the UK, uninsulated walls can account for up to 25% of a home's heat loss—making insulation a vital investment. Modern systems—such as External Wall Insulation (EWI)—combine insulation with a protective render. This envelope retains warmth, reduces energy use, and enhances comfort. Additionally, insulation mitigates condensation and mould by keeping interior wall temperatures above dew point, safeguarding both building and occupant health.



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Render acts as more than a decorative finish—it

#### **Added Value & Sustainability**

Well-insulated, rendered homes often command higher resale values. They reduce reliance on heating systems, lowering carbon emissions and supporting the UK's net-zero goals. Together, these features contribute to high-performance buildings—spaces that are energy-efficient, thermally sound, and more sustainable in operation.

### Community Spotlight: Ecotex Contracts Ltd in Bilston

Local expertise matters—and in Bilston, residents are fortunate to have Ecotex Contracts
Ltd, a family-run specialist with over 25–30 years of experience providing affordable rendering and solid-wall insulation for both domestic and commercial properties across the West Midlands. Based at 43 Broad Street, Bilston, their team has completed more than 10,000 projects, earning excellent reviews for their craftsmanship and reliability.

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## **Lock Stock Music Festival**

Lock Stock 25 rocked Willenhall Memorial Park once again. Over 4000 enjoyed a mix of soul, pop rock and a Bostin Brass Band who paraded through the festival playing a tribute to Ozzy Osbourne and collected donations to NSPCC Childline and The Good Shepherd.

The evening closed with a double rainbow over the festival. A sign of a new beginning and covenant. Some photos courtesy of **Peter Freeth - Genius Photography.** 

Aerial pics courtesy of **Paul Turner PTaerialphotogra-phy.** 

To see more photos, visit www.westmidslife.com or use the QR Code.























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# A Wills Page

Can you find the Seven differences between the two pictures







Why didn't the skeleton go to the Halloween party? Because he had no 'body' to go with.

What do ghosts wear when their eyesight is bad? Spooktacles.

### Can you find all the spooky words hidden in the grid?

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

boo cat ghost pumpkin scary skeleton spider sweets treat trick witch wizard



SOLUTION

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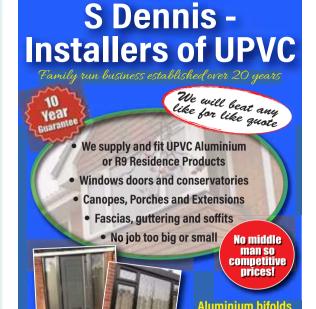
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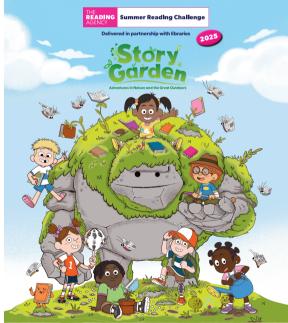
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#### WILLENHALL

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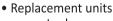
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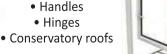


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- Best in Show, was Graham with his Buick. 95 years old, with wooden wheels, steering wheel and a gun case in the back. What a beautiful classic car. Graham has been coming to the Transport Show for years.
- Best car was Brian with his sleek Ford Cortina.
- Best truck was Tina and her magnificent work truck.
- · Best Bike, stunning Vespa.
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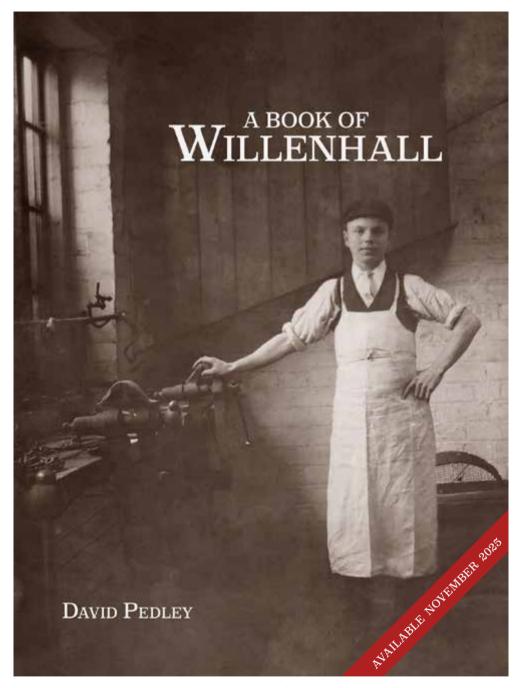




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#### Willenhall History and Heritage Society

In the last magazine I mentioned the Wedding Cake which we went to see back in April. It really is the most ornamental, intricate and most delightful piece of engineering to be hold. It was made by Charles Aubin, a talented lock maker of Wolverhampton early in the 19th Century. It took two years to complete consisting of 44 individual locks representing the main lock principals at that time, separately operated by its own key. Surmounted by a Bramah lock which when operated all are set in motion. It was first seen at the Great Exhibition, World Trade Fair of 1851 in London, it soon became known as the Aubin Trophy.

After the exhibition the trophy was purchased by Alfred Charles Hobbs an American that came to Britain in 1851 for that exhibition and set up his own company in London. The trophy then belonged to Chubb, another London Company when they acquired Hobbs. More recently Gunnebo, a Swedish Company acquired the Trophy when Chubb's safes came under their control. Gunnebo has



allowed the Master Locksmith Association at Rugby to display the Trophy/Wedding Cake.

As Moat Street is very pertinent to the town's history and redevelopment we should take a look at how Samuel Baker's business began. Peter Baker born in Darlaston in 1824 was listed as a Journeyman Locksmith, he, his wife Caroline (Ash) and growing family lived in Walsall Street, Little London and by 1871 in Wednesfield Road Willenhall. It is Peter's son Samuel Martin Baker that takes the family business forward. He married Mary Read Oakley in January 1876 however, she died in 1878. A trade directory of 1880 shows the

firm established in Stafford Street, in 1881 listed as 29, widower, an Iron Padlock Maker Samuel is employing 12 men and 6 boys. This same year he marries Mary Ann Butler, her widowed mother at the time was keeping the family Bakery business going in Lower Lichfield Street. In 1884 Bakers moved to a new factory in Moat street, in Kelly's directory it states "Manufacturer of every description of iron padlocks, sets and suits of locks and also brass leaver locks for home and export, Moat Field Works 1884".



Unfortunately Samuel Martin died aged 38 in 1890, with young children and a business to run Mary Ann marries Harry Hinkley Protheroe, a Birmingham man, in 1893. The firm continues to grow and in 1901 the family are living in New Road. In 1909 Samuel Roland Baker marries Alice Mary Kidson and is now taking a more active part in the business affairs. In 1922 Samuel was granted a Patent for an improvement to padlocks. Harry H Protheroe died in 1934 aged 68, Mary Ann died in 1941 aged 82. The family firm continued till 1955 when it was sold to Century Locks.

Don't forget our **History Fair** on **1st November**, we are now in 3 halls as there is so much to see in our **Willenhall at War Exhibition**, there is something for everyone. Come and say hello.

By Liz Ince. Keeping our history alive.

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### **Crossword Answers**



From page 10

The next issue of the

### Willenhall

is out on 18th November

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