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Local News

Botany Bay Celebrates 50 Years!

Redditch garden centre Botany Bay Nurseries has celebrated its 50th anniversary



Redditch garden centre Botany Bay Nurseries has celebrated its 50th anniversary. Customers and friends joined in the celebrations, tucking into cake and finding out the fascinating history of this independent family-run business.

In 1974, Sue & Peter Ratcliffe bought a plot of land in Astwood Bank, known locally as Botany Bay. They both had a background in horticulture, and it was their ambition to start their own nursery. Peter had gained advanced qualifications and had worked as an adviser at the Ministry of Agriculture.

The couple lived in Redditch, they had a lively toddler, and Sue was heavily pregnant. To

keep money coming in while the business developed, Peter took on a milk round and also worked as a contract landscaper on Redditch New Town. He actually planted most of the trees along Alders Drive.

The land was drained and prepared, and they set about planting Pick Your Own strawberries, raspberries, gooseberries & blackcurrants. Peter could tell some great stories about Pick Your Own — including the topless raspberry pickers! This was a relatively successful business; however, the land itself wasn't good growing land. The only time it had ever been ploughed was in WW2 to grow potatoes. A company based in Stratford asked if Botany Bay could grow

geraniums for them. So a huge polytunnel was built with benching and heating and was soon full of geranium cuttings. In 1978, the couple also began building work for a house on site. The whole family moved into a tiny caravan — Sue and Peter, two young boys, and two dogs. Using a bucket as a toilet and visiting family for showers once a week, it was an unforgettable experience.

With the business growing and a team of staff building up, a huge glasshouse was built, with many more added over the years, up to the 12 houses that they have today.

The business continued to grow for about five years until disaster struck — the Stratford company pulled out of their contract halfway through the season. So, after many sleepless nights, Peter and Sue decided to go it alone and set up their own wholesale business.

Around this time, a chirpy 16-yearold started working for Sue and Peter — a young man called Jeremy. He learned the business and is still here as a Director 39 years later!

The business at this time was purely a wholesale nursery, employing up to 40 staff in the main season. At its peak, they were growing one million geraniums, about 1.25 million fuchsias, and about 3 million other hanging basket plants. They developed a reputation far and wide for selling the "Mother Stock". These were the plants that provided the cuttings for all of the stock. Peo-

ple still ask for these even now! When he left school, their eldest son Jamie went to work at other nurseries to learn the trade from the bottom up and returned to Botany Bay when he was 24. In the early 2000s. there was a shift in the market. Dutch growers were producing vast numbers of plants in staggeringly large glasshouses in the Netherlands. They were keen on price and unlimited on supply smaller growers like Botany Bay found it difficult to compete. So the business had to evolve.

Jamie became more involved in the business as it moved in new directions, opening a Plant Centre, which over the years has become the successful Garden Centre that they have now.

As the garden centre built up, the wholesale business reduced in volume. Their biggest customer is now Botany Bay itself!

Botany Bay are proud to work every year with Astwood Bank in Bloom, Henley in Bloom, and Studley in Bloom. They also supply the local authorities in Alcester, Redditch, and Feckenham. Jamie and the management team have lots of exciting ideas for the future of Botany Bay, so generations of gardeners to come can benefit from the top quality and friendly service that Botany Bay prides itself on.

Botany Bay Nurseries, Garden Centre & Café Edgioake Lane, Astwood Bank Redditch, B96 6BG



https://www.carpetwise.net/extra-discount-october-2025/





Have Your Say: Improving Care at Alexandra Hospital

The Alexandra Hospital in Redditch is inviting patients, carers and local residents to share their experiences of care and the feedback will help shape improvements to hospital services for the year ahead.

Worcestershire Acute Hospitals NHS Trust has launched its annual "Big Quality Conversation" survey, an anonymous questionnaire available in 95 languages. It covers areas such as patient safety, the effectiveness of treatment, and overall hospital experience. The responses gathered will play a vital role in setting the Trust's quality and safety priorities

Recent months have seen positive changes at the Alex. Children's services were rated "good" by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) following an unannounced inspection last autumn, a clear improvement from the previous

"requires improvement" rating. Inspectors noted stronger performance in safety, responsiveness, and leadership.

Diagnostic services have also expanded, with investment aimed at increasing capacity and reducing waiting times for patients who need tests and treatments. These developments are part of a wider effort to strengthen services across the hospital and ease pressure on neighbouring sites. Even so, many in the community are calling for more. Campaigners continue to press for the return of full maternity and paediatric services at the Alex, while others are urging additional investment to help ensure Redditch residents can access more services closer to home, without travelling to Worcester.

Currently, the Alexandra Hospital provides care to thousands of patients every year, and health

leaders say its role will continue to grow, particularly in diagnostics, planned surgery and outpatient care. These developments highlight the Alex's importance at the centre of healthcare for Redditch and the surrounding area.

Have your say: You can share your views by completing the Big Quality Conversation survey at www.worcsacute.nhs.uk/bac24.







My STEPS Support to Enhance Personal Skills

My STEPS is a day service opportunity for adults aged 16 and over who have a learning disability. We work with individuals on a one-to-one or small group basis to support progress in social skills, personal development, confidence, and independence. This warm and welcoming group is ideal for those taking their first step into the adult world, offering encouragement, friendship, and new experiences.

Our base is Leapgate Activity Centre, where we meet Monday to Thursday. This unique location means we can take part in a wide range of farming activities always a highlight! Over time, we've mucked out, fed, showered, and groomed donkeys, a pony, goats, and pigs. We've collected eggs from chickens and ducks, met newborn calves, even witnessed animal births. We garden in the orchard, help put up and take down fences,

use lawn mowers, and harvest apples and potatoes for use in our cooking sessions.

Cooking is a big part of our independent living skills programme. We've made everything from apple crumbles, rhubarb cakes, and cottage pie to soups, pasta dishes, roasts, quiches, omelettes, sandwiches, and salads. Baking cakes and treats to take home is always popular.

Craft and woodwork sessions have included creating personalised aprons, candles, hanging baskets, pom-pom wreaths, planters, hedgehog houses, rabbit hutches and runs. Everyone has the chance to try new skills, from shopping, money management, and recipe planning to cleaning, ironing, mopping, pumpkin carving, bird feeder making, and even Christmas cake decorating.

A typical morning may involve farm work and independent living skills, while afternoons could include sport and fitness, gardening, personal pampering, or enjoying a walk in the local area. Sessions are flexible and shaped by the choices of the people attending.

We provide transport from Redditch and Bromsgrove (one pickup point in each), included in the cost of the day.

My STEPS offers a free taster session so you can see for yourself if it's the right fit for you.

Cost: £60 per day Contact Sarah at: sarah@mysteps.org.uk Call 07934 902020

Take your next step towards building skills, confidence, and independence in a friendly and supportive setting.



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10

Local News

Nancy Butterfly Morris Dancers

Have been dancing in red clogs for 45 years!



Nancy Butterfly Morris Dancers were formed by local ladies as a Northwest "side" in Redditch, at a time when this style—like other Morris traditions such as Cotswold or Border—was becoming very popular. The distinctively named "Nancy Butterfly" was the owner of a house shown on a sketch map of Redditch in 1776, redrawn in the 20th century by talented Redditch artist Norman Neasom. A copy of this map can be found on our website.

The rhythmic tapping sounds made by wooden clogs on hard surfaces are characteristic of Northwest Morris dances, which, as the name suggests, originated in the North West of England—more specifically

around North Cheshire and Lancashire. Tradition has it that the Northwest style emerged from the mills of Lancashire and Cheshire when workers, who generally wore clogs, were allowed time for recreation. Their percussive steps echoed the machines they were temporarily leaving behind! Music was often provided by members of local brass bands or played on everyday instruments using familiar tunes.

In 1980 the Butterflies began their journey, practising in Headless Cross Methodist Church Hall, where they learned dances handed down from the Northwest Morris tradition. These were often named after their places of origin, e.g. Knuts-

ford, Holmes Chapel, Preston. To keep the tradition alive, Nancy Butterfly have also created several of their own dances and given them local names. "Headless Cross." "Crabb's Cross (Roundabout)," and, more recently, "Alvechurch," have become regular features of their sets. The music has continued to use well-known tunes played on folk instruments including accordion, melodeon, recorder, concertina, and percussion. Different dances require different accessories such as bells. hoops, sticks, or hankies.

Northwest Morris dances are performed by sets of dancers working together in patterns handed down by tradition. Nancy Butterfly are a "called" side, which means that one person calls out the names of traditional figures—such as "arches," "hay," or "crossover"—just in advance. Other Northwest sides may use whistles or arm gestures to signal the moves.

Unsurprisingly, none of the original members of Nancy Butterfly are still dancing or playing music. However, several long-standing members have been shaking their sticks and rattling bells for many vears! A wonderful tradition has grown, with sides from all branches of Morris dancing meeting up in villages or towns and taking turns to perform. Local sides will often gather for an evening or afternoon of dance, while large Festivals and Days of Dance are held all around the country—Upton-upon-Severn, Evesham, and Warwick being local examples. Friendships have been made and renewed at these events for decades.

We are determined to ensure that the side continues these old traditions so that others can, like us, enjoy the music, dancing, and conviviality of Morris events. This camaraderie extends as much to musicians as to dancers, and new musicians are always warmly welcomed into our friendly band.

Most importantly, to ensure the continuity of Nancy Butterfly, we need new dancers who are ready to commit to the regular practice needed to learn Northwest Morris. Our members are keen to encourage newcomers to experience the same satisfaction, fulfilment, and fun that

they themselves have enjoyed.

Anyone interested is very welcome to come along—free—to any of our open or practice sessions and see if it's for them. We'd love to meet you. (We have an Open Evening on Monday 13th October at Catshill.)

We currently practise at: Catshill Methodist Church Hall, 66 Golden Cross Lane, Catshill, Bromsgrove, B61 0LG

Mondays, 8–10 pm (please check the calendar on our website to confirm dates).

www.nancybutterfly.co.uk Email: butterfly@nancybutterfly.co.uk IMAGE CREDIT - Pippa Morley

Website:





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BluWave **Community Transport Supporting Redditch Residents Through** Volunteering

BluWave Community Transport is a vital local initiative dedicated to helping residents in and around Redditch access essential services through affordable and reliable transport. Operating across Redditch and Bromsgrove, BluWave provides support to those who need assistance getting to hospital appointments, doctors, dentists, opticians, care homes, and social activities. Their friendly volunteer drivers pick up clients from their homes, accompany them to appointments or events, wait during the visit, and ensure they return safely.

Currently. BluWave is seeking

additional volunteer drivers to help meet the growing demand for their services also to support current drivers Allan Venables and Roger Goddard shown

below. Volunteers play a crucial role in reducing isolation and improving mobility for those who might otherwise struggle to attend medical appointments, social activities, or community events. It is a flexible and rewarding opportunity for anyone with a few hours to spare and a desire to make a meaningful difference in the community.

Volunteers need to be over 20, have a clean UK driving licence.



and their own car with insurance. BluWave provides a DBS check at no cost and looks for individuals with good timekeeping, safety awareness. and empathy for the needs of others.

Those interested in volunteering can contact BluWave Community Transport by phone at 01527 759650, email admin@bluwave.org.uk, or visit bluwave.org.uk/volunteer for more information.

By giving just a few hours, volunteers can help ensure that residents in Redditch and Bromsgrove maintain access to essential services while making a real difference in people's lives.



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For a free quote, call 0800 61 21 118 or visit www.cloudy2clear.co.uk today!







THIS MONTHS

Local Lowdown Quirky Tales & Local Lore

There's always something unusual happening across Redditch and we love sharing the quirky tales that make our area unique.

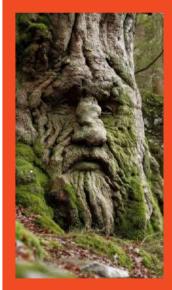
Did you know that Redditch once had a secret underground air raid shelter hidden beneath parts of the town centre? Locals walking along the High Street today might be surprised to learn that, during the Second World War, tunnels and chambers were built below ground to keep people safe during bombing raids. Some of these spaces still exist, quietly tucked away from view.



Meanwhile, over in Arrow Valley Park, residents recently spotted a pair of bright green parakeets making themselves at home along the riverside. Thought to be escapees from an aviary, they've quickly become local celebrities their tropical squawks drawing curious onlookers and photographers. It seems Redditch is a welcoming home for all creatures, not just our traditional wildlife.



And in Church Green, there's been chatter about the mysterious carved faces that keep appearing on tree trunks near the town's riverside walks. Nobody is quite sure who is behind them, but each new discovery brings a smile to passers-by. Whether it's a hidden hobbyist wood carver or a cheeky prankster, it's another reminder of the creativity dotted around our community.



These stories may be light-hearted, but they're a wonderful snapshot of local life a blend of history, nature and playful mystery that makes Redditch such a fascinating place to live.

Keep your eyes peeled you never know what quirky tale might be unfolding just around the corner!

Redditch backs North-South council reorganisation

Redditch Borough councillors have voted to further develop proposals for two unitary councils.



Redditch Borough councillors have voted to further develop proposals for two unitary councils, one for the North and one for the South, in a reorganised Worcestershire.

The decision, made at the council's meeting last night (September 4), comes as the Government prepares to reorganise local government by replacing district and county councils with single-tier 'unitary' authorities that deliver all local services.

Worcestershire's seven councils, six districts and one county, have until November 28 to submit their preferred reorganisation models. A formal Government consultation will follow in early 2026, with a final decision expected later that year.

Councillors considered two options: a single council for all of Worcestershire, or two councils for the North and South, which could see some services run

across both. To assess the pros and cons, five councils including Redditch commissioned consultancy Mutual Ventures for an objective, evidence-based appraisal, which explored factors including costs, population distribution, economy, democracy, and local identity.

Councillors also reviewed feed-back from June's 'Shape Worcestershire' public engagement. Among Redditch respondents who expressed a preference, 75% favoured a two-council model, while 25% supported a single council.

The vote means that Redditch will now work with other councils favouring the two-council model to develop and approve a final submission to the Government ahead of the November deadline.

Council Leader Cllr Sharon Harvey said: "This is a once in 50 years opportunity to shape our

future. It has to be right. Redditch needs a localised approach to public services - a single council across Worcestershire hasn't worked, and won't. Redditch is an urban borough in a rural county, with distinct needs.

"Thank you to everyone who took part in the Shape Worcestershire survey. It showed many residents' lack of confidence in a one-Worcestershire model, and we agree. This will ultimately be a Government decision, but they are listening, and we are giving our backing to a council that's more rooted in and responsive to its communities."

The full options appraisal, commissioned by Bromsgrove District, Malvern Hills District, Redditch Borough, Worcester City, and Wychavon District councils, is available on the council's website alongside other information considered at the September 4 meeting.

For the Shape Worcestershire survey results and more information, visit www.shapeworcestershire.org.

Don't Waste Your Pumpkin:

A Spooky Guide to Using It All!

Carving a pumpkin is a Halloween classic, but what about all that delicious flesh and those tasty seeds? Don't let them go to waste! The inside of your pumpkin is packed with potential for some seriously spooktacular treats.

Pumpkin seeds are a ghoulishly good snack. Simply wash them, toss with a little olive oil and your favourite seasonings (like salt, paprika, or chilli flakes), and roast until crunchy. They're a great way to use a part of the pumpkin that often gets thrown away!

The stringy pulp and remnants of flesh can be a little tricky, but they're perfect for purée. Simmer with a splash of water, blend until smooth, and you've got a base for delicious pumpkin pie, soup, pasta sauce or even a warming latte.

This Halloween, be a pro at preventing food waste by using every bit of your pumpkin. For more and spooky recipes visit www.letswasteless.com/foodsavvy.















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Celebrating Success:

The Redditch Business Awards 2025

By Ella McCormack, Group Manager of Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians



Back with a bang, the fourth annual Redditch Business Awards took centre stage at the Redditch Palace Theatre on Saturday 13th September. The highly anticipated event, hosted by Redditch BID, recognises the dedication and passion shown by the outstanding individuals and businesses making a difference to our town.

2025 saw the biggest response yet, with nearly 2,000 entries covering over 280 businesses flying in from across the district. This year granted 13 award categories, with 5 nominees shortlisted for each. For the first time in the awards history, a runner-up for each category was born. 'Highly Commended' winners were invited onstage to receive their custom trophy and certifi-

cate before the category winners were revealed.

BID Manager, Muj Rahman, enthused, "The Redditch Business Awards are powered by Redditch BID, but they belong to the town. They're about celebrating the ambition, resilience, and everyday excellence that lives in our local businesses. From shop floors to salons, factories to food stores, these awards show that Redditch is full of talent and heart. We created them to recognise that... and every year, the town shows up bigger than before."

Guests at the black-tie event were treated to culinary delights courtesy of Rilys Restaurant and Olawa Craft Bakery. BBC Radio's Flliott Webb made a welcome return as the master of ceremonies for the evening. Talented young students from Stagecoach Redditch opened the show in style, with soulful singer-songwriter Gemma Nelson closing at the break. S Club 7 superstar Bradley McIntosh raised the roof for the grand finale, aptly encouraging the crowd to 'Reach' (for the stars).

The atmosphere was warm and welcoming, with an added buzz of excitement. Emotions were running high as the winners were announced and applauded to the stage.

Charley Barker, winner of Independent Business of the Year, had a tear in her eye as she told the crowd that no-one showed up for her first Zumba class. She now has the demand for adult classes at Ar-

row Vale on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, as well as children's classes on a Sunday.

Charity of the Year belongs to AHead of Wellbeing, a vital local organisation formed in 2019 to help people in crisis. Silver in this category went to Animal FoodBank UK, whose mission is to keep families and their pets together through times of hardship.

Heartfelt congratulations to all the winners and finalists of this year's prestigious awards. It's great to see the community coming together to celebrate each other's achievements. Finally, hats off to Redditch BID for creating such an award worthy awards program!



REDDITCH BUSINESS AWARDS 2025 RESULTS

BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER: Palace Theatre Redditch HIGHLY COMMENDED: Swift Temps FINALISTS: Hays Travel, Jack & Jones, Wendyhouse Painting and Decorating

CHARITY OF THE YEAR
WINNER:
AHead of Wellbeing CIC
HIGHLY COMMENDED:
Animal FoodBank UK
FINALISTS: Bound together
CIC, High Strive CIC, Redditch &
Bromsgrove First Responders

EMPLOYER OF THE YEAR WINNER: Diamond Bus HIGHLY COMMENDED: Rubicon Leisure FINALISTS: Swift Temps, Emma Edwards, Pandora

SHOPPERS CHOICE AWARD WINNER: Olawa Craft Bakery HIGHLY COMMENDED: RILEY Boutique FINALISTS: Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians, The Fit Club Redditch, The Entertainer

COMMUNITY HERO AWARD WINNER: Robert Jankowski HIGHLY COMMENDED: SEND support Redditch FINALISTS: Carl Dickens, Kacie and Sam, Rachel Ind/Shannon Gawn

CREATIVE BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER: Stagecoach Redditch HIGHLY COMMENDED: Top Box Studios FINALISTS: Forge Mill Needle Museum, Paul Edwins Media Productions, Kirin Tattoo Studio

EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR
WINNER:
Holly Sproson
HIGHLY COMMENDED:
Ella McCormack
FINALISTS: Hannah McLaughlin,
Mike Landreth, Nicky Ashley

TRADESPERSON OF THE YEAR WINNER:

Marc Sterland, Aerials & Satellites HIGHLY COMMENDED: Kingfisher Home Developments FINALISTS: Ashley Field, Penns Grounds Maintenance, Revive Roofing and Building Solutions

INDEPENDENT BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER: Charley Barker Zumba HIGHLY COMMENDED: Olawa Craft Bakery FINALISTS: Honey Bees Day Nursery, Lazy Panda, Maya Gifts of Redditch

CUSTOMER SERVICE AWARD WINNER: Yours Clothing HIGHLY COMMENDED: The Fragrance Shop Redditch FINALISTS: Bainbridge Bespoke Opticians, Needles & Pins, RILEY Boutique

MANUFACTURING BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER: Vernier Springs & Pressings HIGHLY COMMENDED: Thorlux Lighting FINALISTS: DCS Manufacturing, Redhill, Mettis Aerospace

HOSPITALITY BUSINESS OF THE YEAR WINNER: Rilys Restaurant HIGHLY COMMENDED: Pitcheroak Golf Course FINALISTS: No 505 Cafe Bar, Pepe's Redditch, Three Cooks coffee lounge

HAIR, BEAUTY, AND WELLBEING BUSINESS OF THE YEARWINNER: The Loft Hair and Beauty HIGHLY COMMENDED: 24/7 Fitness FINALISTS: Bridge to Beauty, Elle's Nails & Beauty, Temple Trims



hosepipe bans enforced. Gardens and allotments wilted under the extreme sun, and vegetable patches in Webheath and Walkwood suffered badly.

Schools, shops, and the small Redditch industrial community, including the famous needle and fishing tackle manufacturers, struggled as operations slowed due to water shortages, Public fountains, normally bustling with children, were turned off, and the town's ponds shrank noticeably.

Despite the challenges, the town's spirit shone through. Neighbours rallied together, sharing water, helping maintain public spaces, and organising local swimming and paddling spots to keep children cool.

People made creative use of water from wells and local streams, while community groups in Matchborough and Lodge Park arranged informal summer events to keep spirits high. Even small businesses found ways to adapt, ensuring Redditch kept moving despite the punishing conditions.



Lasting Impact

The 1976 drought left a lasting mark on Redditch. The extreme heat and lack of rain sparked conversations about water conservation and emergency preparedness that influenced local policies for decades.

Residents still fondly remember barbecues in scorching gardens, trips to the few remaining wet patches along the canals, and the unusual sight of dry canal beds in the town centre.

Today, as heatwaves grow more frequent, the memories of 1976 serve as a vivid reminder of Redditch's resilience and adaptability, while underscoring the importance of protecting the town's green spaces and waterways for future generations.

Redditch History

Drought and Drama: Redditch in the Long Hot Summer of '76

The summer of 1976 is still remembered as one of the most sweltering and challenging periods in UK history - and Redditch was no exception. Temperatures soared across the West Midlands. and the town faced unprecedented drought conditions that made even the heatwave of 2025 look mild.

Scorched Streets, Parks, and Canals

Redditch, known for its historic canals, Kingfisher Shopping Centre area, and the Abbey Stadium, saw waterways shrink dramatically. The Stratford-upon-Avon Canal and the town's smaller feeder streams

ran low, with boats stranded and towpaths baked under the relentless sun. Arrow Valley Country Park, a favourite spot for families and picnickers, was parched, with grass turning brown and wildlife struggling in the heat. Even local sports pitches and school fields in Winyates, Matchborough, and Church Hill became dry, cracked surfaces, making outdoor activities almost impossible during peak summer.

Water Shortages and Community Resilience Residents faced strict water rationing, with standpipes set up on streets across the town and



Redditch Matters - Monthly Readership 32,000











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Putting Money Back in Working Families' Pockets

By Chris Bloore, Labour MP for Redditch and the Villages

For too long, working families in Redditch and the Villages were left to struggle. Parents were forced to make impossible choices: give up work to look after their children or pay nursery fees so high they wiped out their salaries. It was usually mums who had to sacrifice their careers while previous governments shrugged their shoulders and told families to get on with it. That was never good enough.

In September, that changed. This Government delivered the biggest expansion of childcare in our country's history. Over half a million families are now receiving 30 hours of Government-funded childcare every week - saving parents up to £7,500 a year per child.

That's money straight back into the pockets of hardworking people.

Let's be clear about what this means. £7,500 is more than half the average annual mortgage payment for a first-time buyer. It's almost double what many families spend on food shopping in a year. It's the difference between saying "no" to opportunity and having the freedom to build a better future.

Right here in Redditch, Matchborough First School Academy is opening one of 300 new Government-funded nurseries. Real investment, real savings and real opportunities for our children. But the Government isn't stop-

dreaded the school holidays because childcare costs soared while bills kept piling up. That's why we're investing over £600 million in the Holiday Activities and Food programme, guaranteeing hundreds of thousands of children fun activities and nutritious meals when schools are closed. This saves families around £300 a year and ensures no child in Redditch goes hungry during the holidays.

We're also rolling out free breakfast clubs in every primary school and expanding free school meals to another half a million children. Add to that our new Best Start Familv Hubs and vou can see the difference a Government that backs working people can make.

Previous governments told vou childcare was your problem. This Government is proving it's our responsibility to make sure every child - whatever their background gets the best start in life. This is what real change looks like.

Get in touch: Chris.bloore.mp@parliament.uk X: @ChrisBloore Bluskyy: @chrisbloore Instagram: @chrisbloore4redditch

Sign up to my newsletter: www.chrisbloore.co.uk

Your Local Councillor Ward Surgeries In Redditch

Redditch Councillors are continuing their commitment to being visible, accessible, and available to residents by holding regular local ward surgeries across the borough.

These sessions offer a valuable opportunity for residents to speak directly with their elected representatives, raise concerns, ask questions, or simply connect with the people representing them on Redditch Borough Council.

Whether you're looking for advice, need help with a local issue, or want to better understand what's happening in your community, your local Labour team is here to listen.

Below is a list of upcoming ward surgeries across Redditch:

North Ward (including Church Hill)

Councillors Bill Hartnett and Monica Stringfellow

- •1st Saturday of the month Ecumenical Centre, 10:30am-12:00pm
- •3rd Friday of the month

St Andrew's Church, Upper Field Close, 12:00–1:00pm

Matchborough & Woodrow

Councillors Jane Spilsbury, Paul Wren and James Fardoe

- •1st Saturday of the month Christ Church, Matchborough, 10:30am-12:00pm
- •3rd Saturday of the month Woodrow Library, 10:30am-12:00pm

Headless Cross & Oakenshaw (including Wirehill)

Councillors Juliet Barker Smith, Ian Woodall and David Munro

- •1st Saturday of the month Ecumenical Centre, 10:30am-12:00pm
- •3rd Saturday of the month Headless Cross Green (tent), 11:00am-12:30pm

Winyates

Councillors Jen Snape, Rita Rogers and Alan Mason

- •3rd Saturday of the month Winyates Green Community Centre, 10:30–11:30am
- •3rd Saturday of the month

The Link, Winyates, 12:00–1:00pm

Greenlands & Lakeside

Councillors Andy Fry, Juma Begum and Joanna Kane

- •1st Saturday of the month Ecumenical Centre, 10:30am-12:00pm
- •2nd Saturday of the month St John's Church, Greenlands Avenue, 10:30–11:30am

Central Ward

Councillors Sharon Harvey, Will Boyd and Gary Slim

•1st Saturday of the month Ecumenical Centre, 10:30am-12:00pm



Do you host a local councillor surgery, advice session or drop-in clinic in Redditch?

We'd love to include your details in a future issue. Please email us at: contactredditchmatters@gmail.com with the information.

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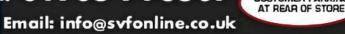
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Sleep in style live in comfort with DaVinci Beds & Furniture

Ready to wake up refreshed, unwind in style, and transform your living space into a sanctuary?

They say a good day starts with a good night's sleep, and for the people of Redditch, there's one name that's become synonymous with both comfort and style: DaVinci Beds & Furniture. Proudly based in the heart of town, this independent showroom has built its reputation on something we can all appreciate—helping local people create homes filled with quality, character, and relaxation.

At a time when many of us are tempted to buy online and hope for the best, DaVinci offers something refreshingly different. Step inside their welcoming Redditch showroom

and you'll instantly see what sets them apart. Rows of beautifully crafted beds, mattresses, sofas and chairs invite you to try them out for yourself—because comfort should always be experienced, not guessed at. This local approach means customers can make choices with confidence. No disappointments, no guesswork—just expert advice and the reassurance that comes from dealing with a trusted, familyrun specialist right here in the community.

Buying a bed isn't simply about choosing a frame, and buying furniture isn't just about filling a room. At DaVinci, John, Corinne and the team guide you through the whole process, ensuring every detail is tailored to your needs. From sturdy bases and plush mattresses to bespoke sofas and handcrafted chairs, everything is carefully chosen for quality, durability and style. Their specialism in iconic Chesterfields showcases the timeless elegance that can be brought into a home, while their bespoke upholstery service means you can select fabrics, colours and finishes to suit your own taste perfectly.

What really makes DaVinci Beds & Furniture stand out is the personal touch. While big national chains might focus on quantity, DaVinci focus on quality—curating ranges that combine craftsmanship with



style. It's this thoughtful approach that makes them more than just a shop. They've become a place where comfort meets character, and where every visitor feels welcome to take their time, lie down, sit back, and find the piece that suits them best.

Being based in Redditch isn't just a matter of location—it's part of their identity. DaVinci Beds & Furniture has grown by supporting local households and understanding the needs of the community. They've built trust the traditional way: by being approachable, reliable, and ensuring every customer walks away satisfied. It's this community spirit that has made them a go-to name in the area, and why so many residents recommend them to family and friends.

A bed or sofa is more than just furniture; it's the foundation of good health, energy, and wellbeing, as well as the backdrop to family life. DaVinci know this better than anyone, and that's why they're passionate about helping Redditch sleep well, relax well, and live well. With their combination of expert advice, bespoke options, and friendly local service, they make creating a comfortable home both enjoyable and reassuring.

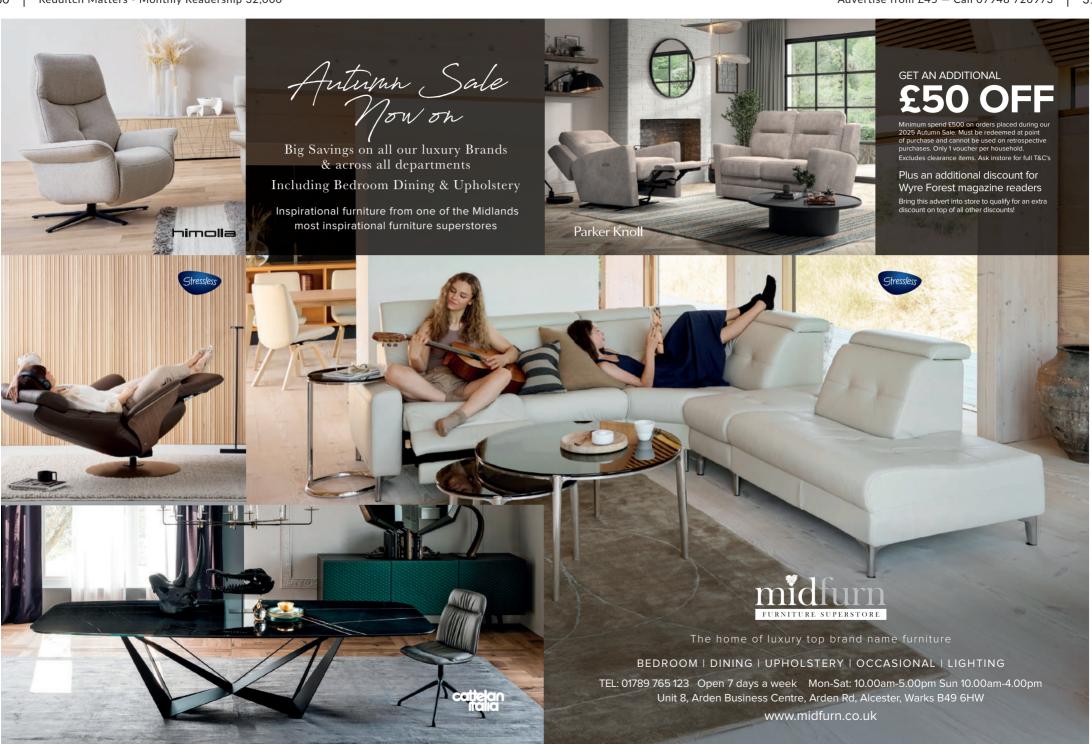
So, if you're ready to wake up refreshed, unwind in style, and transform your living space into a sanctuary, you don't need to look far. Right here in Redditch, DaVinci Beds & Furniture are the true local specialists—proving that when it comes to comfort, nothing beats a personal touch.

Visit DaVinci Beds & Furniture at 3 Windsor Road, Redditch, B97 6DJ.

For more inspiration, take a look online at www.davincibeds.co.uk or www.davincifurniture.co.uk, or follow them on Facebook:
@davincibeds or @Davinci Furniture.

You can also see their advert on page 2 of this magazine for more details.







Refresh Your Space: Simple Style Updates to Revive Your Home

September is the perfect time to reset — and that includes your living space. Whether the kids are back at school, you're returning from holidays, or simply craving a change, this is an ideal month to refresh your interiors and set the tone for the months ahead.

Start by evaluating how each room feels. Does your space still reflect your style? Could it be more comfortable or functional? Sometimes, the smallest updates — new cushions, updated throws, or a change in curtains — can breathe new life into a tired room. Look for colours that soothe and energise, such as soft greens, warm neutrals, or elegant greys.

Layering textures adds depth and personality. Try combining natural materials like cotton. linen, and jute with softer elements such as velvet or boucle. It's a subtle way to make any room feel more inviting without overhauling everything.

Lighting plays a key role in atmosphere. As daylight changes, it's worth reconsidering your lamps and fixtures. A statement floor lamp or well-placed table light can transform corners that once felt dull. Warm white bulbs and layered lighting (overhead + task + ambient) help keep your space practical and cosy.

Thinking bigger? September is a great time to start a refresh project before the busy end-of-year season. A fresh coat of paint, a feature wall using wallpaper or panelling, or upgrading tired furniture can make a huge difference. Swapping hardware on kitchen cabinets or updating a

rug can also modernise your space with minimal effort.

Don't forget greenery — houseplants are still a strong interior trend and work well in every season. From trailing vines on shelves to tall leafy centrepieces, plants bring calm, colour, and a sense of life into your home.

If you enjoy getting hands-on, consider upcycling furniture or browsing second-hand markets for one-of-a-kind finds. A little creativity goes a long way when it comes to interiors.

Now's the time to rework your space into something that feels fresh, functional, and a reflection of you.

Everything you need for your dream kitchen, bathroom or bedroom at affordable prices.



At Kensi Hope we pride ourselves in offering an amazing range of high-quality products, coupled with the very highest standards in customer service.

So, if you know exactly what you want, we can point you in the right direction. And if you haven't a clue what style , shape or colour you're looking for, our team has the experience, flair, and ideas to help you select your perfect bathroom, kitchen, or bedroom



Kitchena

Find your perfect kitchen, we've got the experience to advise on what will and won't work from a practical point of view. We advise on colour combinations, storage solutions, and finishing touches such as appliances, lighting, handles, taps, and even the kitchen sink.



Bathrooms

Everything you might need for your bathroom including sanitaryware, furniture, baths / bath panels, shower units, brassware, heating, mirrors, wall panels, tiles, and accessories. So, you'll find exactly what you're looking for, in a variety of options to suit your style and your budget.



Bedrooma

Bedroom furniture styles, depending on your preference and the style of your property. We also have a made to measure collection for rooms with sloping walls or extra high ceilings.



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Maximising Small Spaces: Style Meets Practicality

Living in a smaller home doesn't finishes, mirrored surfaces, and mean compromising on style or function — in fact, it's often where clever design shines brightest. Making the most of limited square footage is all about smart planning, multifunctional pieces, and a bit of creative thinking.

The first step is layout. Assess how each room is used and whether the furniture really suits the space. Modular sofas, extendable tables, and nesting side tables are great options for flexibility without clutter. Ottomans that double as storage or a daybed that works as both a sofa and guest bed are practical and space-saving.

Light and colour play a big part in opening up smaller rooms. Stick to pale tones or soft neutrals to create a sense of airiness. Glossy

metallic accents help reflect light and make the room feel bigger. A large mirror opposite a window can work wonders in visually expanding the space.

Vertical space is often underused. Consider tall shelving units, hanging storage, or wallmounted desks and bedside tables to free up floor space. Open shelving can also add visual interest and function when styled thoughtfully with books, art, and greenery. Even high-mounted curtain poles can draw the eye upwards and give the illusion of height.

Built-in furniture is another way to maximise awkward spaces. like alcoves or sloped ceilings. Bespoke joinery can provide seamless storage while enhancing the character of your home. Window seats with hidden storage, floor-to-ceiling wardrobes, or built-in bookcases add charm as well as practicality. For those on a budget. flat-pack and modular ranges can often be customised with a few tweaks and clever styling.

For renters or those not looking to renovate, consider easy upgrades: peel-and-stick wallpaper, floating shelves, updated soft furnishings, and statement lighting can make a room feel refreshed without longterm commitment or expense.

Remember, small doesn't have to mean basic. With a thoughtful approach, a mix of functionality, and a few space-saving tricks, even the most compact room can feel welcoming, balanced, and beautifully

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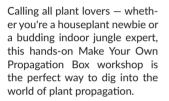
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Make Your Own **Propagation Box**

Grow Your Green Thumb with The Bearded Plantaholic



Led by horticulture enthusiast Jonathan Paul Balchandani. better known as The Bearded Plantaholic, this engaging and creative workshop will guide

you through the step-by-step process of building your very own propagation box. Using a specially prepared mix of soil. perlite, moss and other nurturing ingredients, you'll learn how to nestle cuttings into their perfect growing conditions.

Under Jonathan's expert guidance, you'll gain confidence in one of the most rewarding areas of plant care - and take home



a personalised propagation box that, with a little time and love, will flourish into a tray of healthy new plants.

All materials are provided, including plant cuttings — but if you have a treasured houseplant you'd like to propagate, you're welcome to bring it along and work with it during the session.

Whether you're curious about cuttings, ready to expand your plant collection. or simply looking for a calming, creative weekend activity, this workshop promises to be a leafy delight.



- •Saturday 6 September 2025
- 11:00am to 12:30pm
- •Saturday 4 October 2025 11:00am to 12:30pm
- •Saturday 8 November 2025
- 11:00am to 12:30pm

St Peter's Garden Centre, Worcester

Book your place: www.stpetersgardencentre.co.uk/webshop/events

Spaces are limited, so early booking is advised - get ready to grow your knowledge and your houseplant collection!





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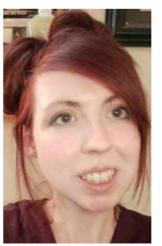
Confident IN SPEAKING?

Become a Confident and Effective Speaker with Bromsgrove Speakers Club





Ben - Member of BSC



Toni - Member of BSC

For anyone who needs to speak in meetings, deliver presentations, or is simply seeking personal development or a new challenge, Bromsgrove Speakers Club offers a welcoming and effective way to grow in confidence and technique.

An independent, not-for-profit organisation, Bromsgrove Speakers Club is run by its members for its members, with the aim of helping individuals become more confident and capable public speakers. Open to anyone aged 18 and over, the club meets fortnightly on Tuesday evenings in the Barn meeting room at The Bell, located on the A491 Bromsgrove–Hagley dual carriageway.

Each session is self-contained, making it easy for newcomers to join at any time. Meetings typically feature a varied format, which may include prepared speeches, impromptu speaking, and educational sessions. Constructive and positive feedback is always provided to help all members grow in their speaking abilities.

The club's flexible speaker development programme allows individuals to tailor their learning to their own needs and pace. One former member shared, "I learn something new and have a laugh at every meeting."

Glossophobia – the fear of public speaking – is a widespread and often debilitating condition. It can lead to intense anxiety and avoidance, but Bromsgrove Speakers Club offers a safe and supportive environment to help individuals overcome this fear through regular practice. While nerves may never completely disappear, members are frequently amazed by how effectively they learn to manage them.

Members come from all walks of life and join for a variety of reasons, whether they're complete novices or experienced speakers looking to sharpen their skills. As Ben, a current member, puts it, "Bromsgrove Speakers Club is a supportive and friendly environment. I've gained valuable skills that have benefitted me both personally and professionally."

Toni, another member, echoes this sentiment: "For years I grappled with a persistent fear of public speaking. However, thanks to the support of the group, I now notice steady improvement and a growing sense of confidence each month."

Anyone interested in learning more is encouraged to attend a Taster Evening. Bookings and additional information are available via the club's website:

www.BromsgroveSpeakers.org.uk

THREE **OF THE BEST VITAMINS**

Redditch Matters - Monthly Readership 32,000

Good health doesn't just "happen" on its own. So, which vitamins and minerals do you need to help you feel as well as possible?

If you're looking to keep your supplement stash nice and lean, you can't go far wrong with these top three picks!

Vitamins and minerals (amongst other nutrients) control hundreds of processes in the human body. This includes muscle growth and joint support, as well as giving you enough energy to function dayto-day.

With the 13 essential vitamins and 16 minerals our bodies need, it can be hard to know which ones to prioritise in your supplement schedule.

But the question is, how can you get enough of the nutrients that help to keep your health in check?

Here are three of the best vitamins to take daily (which are proven to have multiple benefits throughout the body).

Vitamin B12



We're kicking off with vitamin B12.

The largest (and most complex) vitamin there is, B12 is stored in the muscles and liver. It's mostly found in animal products, so it can be difficult for people on



meat-free diets to get enough.

Here's a quick quiz question for you:

Is B12 involved in the metabolism of hundreds or thousands of cells in the human body?

Neither! Your body has over 37 trillion cells, and B12 is needed to metabolise every. single. one.

Astounding, right?

Benefits of Vitamin B12:

*Boosting bone mineral density *Decreasing symptoms of

depression

- *Forming red blood cells
- *Lowering risk of macular degeneration
- *Maintaining normal energy levels
- *Preventing anemia
- *Slowing mental decline with
- *Supporting nerve cells

Vitamin C

Vitamin C (otherwise known as L-ascorbic acid) is a watersoluble nutrient.

Unlike many mammals, the human body can't synthesise vitamin C.

Therefore, it goes without saying that we need a little outside help — either from food or supplementation — to keep our levels healthy.

Benefits of Vitamin C:

- *Absorbing iron
- *Building collagen for joints. nails, and skin
- *Healing cuts and wounds
- *Lowering blood pressure
- *Maintaining cognitive skills, such as memory and thinking

*Protecting the immune system *Supporting muscles, cartilage, and teeth



Vitamin D3

Vitamin D proudly takes its place on our list as the "sunshine vitamin."

D2 and D3 are the two most vital vitamin D compounds in

D3 (cholecalciferol) is the type of vitamin D that can only be found in animal products. whereas D2 is mostly seen in plants.

Benefits of Vitamin D:

- *Battling off inflammation
- *Decreasing the risk of gum disease and tooth decay
- *Governing blood sugar levels
- *Improving cancer outcomes
- *Promoting weight loss
- *Strengthening muscles
- *Treating high blood pressure







Ballet with Melody Bear on Sundays!



Grease Brings 1950s Magic

To the Palace Theatre - Redditch



Get ready to step back in time as the Palace Theatre, Redditch, welcomes the feel-good, highenergy musical Grease from Tuesday 7 to Saturday 11 October 2025. Presented by the Alcester Musical Theatre Company, this amateur production promises all the fun, sass, and nostalgia that has made Grease a timeless favourite.

Set in 1959 at Rydell High, the story follows the leather-jack-eted "Burger Palace Boys" and the effortlessly cool "Pink Ladies" as they navigate the ups and downs of teenage life. At the heart of it all is the summer romance between smoothtalking Danny Zuko and sweet

newcomer Sandy Dumbrowski. When the pair unexpectedly find themselves at the same school, the big question is whether they can rekindle their love – and still keep their reputations intact.

The soundtrack alone is worth the ticket, with hits like Greased Lightnin', Hopelessly Devoted to You, Sandy, We Go Together, and You're the One That I Want guaranteed to have audiences singing along. With its mix of romance, humour, and toe-tapping tunes, this production will bring the vibrant spirit of the 1950s roaring back to life on the Palace Theatre stage.

Performances run all week, with evening and matinee shows

available. Tickets are priced at £24.50 for adults, £20 for children under 16, with special rates for groups and the option of box seats for up to four people. The show is suitable for ages seven and above.

With a talented local cast and a soundtrack that's stood the test of time, Grease at the Palace Theatre is set to be a highlight of Redditch's autumn events calendar – a perfect night out for musical lovers, nostalgia-seekers, and anyone ready to relive the magic of this much-loved story.

To book your tickets visit: www.redditchpalacetheatre.co.uk/ whats-on/all-shows/grease





Simply the Best

Tina Turner Tribute Night Comes to Redditch!

Get ready, Redditch - an electrifying night of music, energy, and pure rock 'n' soul magic is heading your way this autumn. On Saturday 18 October 2025, Studley Road Social Club will be alive with the unmistakable sound of Tina Turner's greatest hits, brought to life by none other than the sensational Bupsi, star of ITV's The X Factor.

Bupsi burst onto our screens with a voice as big as her personality, wowing the judges - including the famously hardto-please Simon Cowell - and earning a place in the hearts of music fans nationwide. Now. she's bringing that same powerhouse presence to Redditch for one unforgettable night.

Expect all the classics you know and love: What's Love Got to Do with It, Proud Mary, River Deep, Mountain High - each one delivered with that trademark Tina energy that makes you want to dance, sing, and maybe even strut a little. Backed by a topnotch live sound and a buzzing atmosphere, this is more than a gig – it's a full-throttle tribute to one of music's greatest icons.

The evening kicks off at 7:00 pm with a DJ getting the party started, before Bupsi takes to the stage around 9:00 pm. After the show, the DJ will keep the dancefloor moving until late. making it the perfect night out for friends, couples, or anyone who just wants to let their hair down and have a good time.

Tickets are just £12.50 - incredible value for a night of worldclass entertainment right on your doorstep. With demand already building, early booking is recommended to avoid missing out. So dig out your dancing shoes, gather your friends, and get ready to belt out the chorus - because when it comes to live music in Redditch this October, this tribute night is... simply the best!

Saturday 18 October 2025 Studley Road Social Club, Studley Road, Redditch, B98 7HF Doors: 7:00 pm - late Tickets: £12.50, available via Skiddle

The 100-Year-Old Recipe Challenge Trying and Modernising Century-Old Dishes



What were people eating 100 years ago?

The world of food in the 1920s was a fascinating mix of innovation, necessity, and old-world traditions. Post-World War I, home cooks relied on simple, economical ingredients, while restaurants and hotels served decadent dishes to a growing urban middle class. The decade also saw the rise of processed foods and the beginnings of American convenience cooking.

To honor the past, I embarked on the 100-Year-Old Recipe Challenge, testing vintage recipes from the 1920s and giving them a modern twist. Some dishes stood the test of time, while others well, let's just say some trends deserve to remain in history.

Choosing the Recipes

For this challenge, I selected a mix of savory and sweet dishes, along with a classic cocktail from the Prohibition era:

- 1. Tomato Aspic A gelatinbased savory dish that was a common party staple.
- 2. Chicken à la King A creamy chicken dish served over toast or puff pastry.
- 3. Pineapple Upside-Down

Cake – A dessert that gained immense popularity in the 1920s.

4. Bee's Knees Cocktail – A ginbased drink created to mask the harsh taste of Prohibition-era alcohol.

Cooking the Original Versions

I started by following the original 1920s recipes as closely as possible.

Tomato Aspic

A gelatin mold made with tomato juice, Worcestershire sauce, and spices, tomato aspic was once considered the height of sophistication. However, I quickly learned that chilled, jiggly, tomato-flavored jelly is an acquired taste. The texture was unusual by today's standards, and the tangy, cold bite didn't appeal to my modern palate.



Chicken à la King

This dish, a mix of diced chicken, mushrooms, and bell peppers in a creamy sauce, was rich, comforting, and undeniably delicious. The original recipe was heavy on butter and flour, making for a thick, decadent sauce. Served over toast, it felt old-

fashioned but still satisfying.



Pineapple Upside-Down Cake
One of the more recognizable dishes, this cake featured
canned pineapple rings, maraschino cherries, and a brown
sugar glaze. The flavors were
classic and timeless, though
the cake itself was denser than
what we might expect today.



Bee's Knees Cocktail

This gin, honey, and lemon cocktail was delightful. Originally created to hide the taste of low-quality Prohibition-era gin, it remains a bright and refreshing drink, still popular in modern bars.



Modernizing the Recipes To bring these dishes into the 21st century, I made a few adjustments:

Tomato Aspic \rightarrow Tomato Gazpacho

Instead of the gelatin mold, I deconstructed the flavors into a fresh, vibrant tomato gazpacho,

blending tomatoes, cucumber, and bell peppers into a chilled soup. The transformation made it more palatable while still paying homage to the original ingredients.



Chicken à la King → Lightened Chicken à la King

To modernize Chicken à la King, I reduced the butter and flour, using a touch of Greek yogurt to maintain creaminess. I also served it over whole-grain toast instead of white bread, making it slightly healthier without losing its nostalgic charm.



Pineapple Upside-Down Cake

→ Grilled Pineapple with
Caramel Drizzle

Instead of a dense cake, I grilled fresh pineapple slices and drizzled them with a homemade brown sugar caramel sauce. The smoky-sweet combination elevated the flavors while keeping it light and fresh.



Bee's Knees Cocktail → The Modern Bee's Knees**

The classic cocktail didn't need much improvement, but I experimented by infusing the honey syrup with lavender, adding a subtle floral note to complement the lemon and gin.



What Did I Learn?

This challenge revealed how much food culture has evolved in 100 years.

Some flavours and techniques remain timeless, while others reflect the era's limitations. Heavy reliance on butter, gelatin, and processed ingredients has given way to fresher, lighter, and more globally influenced cooking.

Yet, there's a certain charm in rediscovering these recipes.

Food is history on a plate, telling the story of who we were and how we lived. With a few modern tweaks, even the most outdated dish can find new life.

Would I make tomato aspic again? Probably not. But I'd happily whip up another Bee's Knees cocktail and a modern Chicken à la King anytime. Cheers to the past—and the future of food!

A Countryside Gem

On Your Doorstep – The Moat House Alcester!

Tucked away in the scenic countryside of Alcester, The Moat House offers a relaxed, friendly atmosphere that's perfect for long lunches, family dinners, or leisurely pints by the fire. With its warm welcome and seasonal menus, this charming pub delivers both character and flavour with every visit.

The food is hearty, flavourful, and full of variety. Whether you're in the mood for a wood-fired pizza, a perfectly grilled steak, or one of their much-loved pub classics, every dish is prepared with quality ingredients and plenty of care. The seasonal menus keep things fresh,

and the indulgent puddings are a must-try. Sundays are all about the proper roast – generous portions, rich flavours, and all the trimmings. For those who prefer a slow start, the dedicated brunch menu is an ideal excuse for a lazy morning, enjoyed in the garden with a coffee or something a little stronger.

The drinks list is equally tempting, offering crisp local ales, rotating craft beers, lagers, and ciders alongside a thoughtful wine list and freshly made cocktails. Whether you're celebrating, unwinding after work, or simply enjoying the countryside setting, there's a drink to match







Some of the finest meals at The Moat House Inn



For something a little different, The Moat House's tepee experience is a real highlight. Designed for groups of 15 or more, it features a buffet-style menu with wood-fired pizzas, sliders, skewers, dips, and salads, all enjoyed around your own fire pit.

The tepee comes with a music docking station, dedicated service staff, and optional extras like cocktail jugs or even a fun Martini Tree sharer – perfect for birthdays, reunions, or festive gatherings.

Locals love The Moat House for its delicious food, welcoming



Enjoyed the overall atmosphere, quality food, friendly staff and great service, Even our pooch got some love with a bowl of water & a biscuit!

11

atmosphere, and good value, making it a go-to spot for both special occasions and casual meals. While busy times can occasionally mean a short wait for service, the overall experience is warm, satisfying, and worth the trip.

If you're looking for a countryside venue that blends great food, well-chosen drinks, and a relaxed yet special feel, The Moat House in Alcester is a place to put firmly on your list.

To find out more, visit moathouseinnalcester.co.uk









Brunch - The Moat House Inn



Blackberry Hunt & Bake:

A Sweet Taste of September

There's nothing quite like the simple pleasure of blackberry picking on a sunny September afternoon. Across Wyre Forest, the hedgerows are brimming with these juicy dark berries, just waiting to be gathered.

Whether you're wandering along the canal in Stourport, exploring the trails of Habberley Valley, or strolling the riverside paths near Bewdley, you're likely to spot a bramble or two. Foraging is a brilliant way to reconnect

with nature—and it's completely free. Just bring a tub, wear gloves to avoid the thorns, and stick to safe, accessible public paths. Avoid berries close to roads or sprayed areas, and always wash your haul before eating.

Once you've picked your fill, the fun doesn't stop there. Blackberries are wonderfully versatile. Eat them fresh, freeze for later, or—our favourite—turn them into a classic crumble. There's something so satisfying about baking

with ingredients you picked yourself.

It's a lovely weekend activity, and a great way to get kids involved in both nature and cooking.

Look out for wild apples too—they often grow near brambles and are ideal companions for blackberries in a traditional dessert. Soft, tangy apple balances the rich sweetness of the berries perfectly. Next page: our easy, family-friendly recipe for Blackberry & Apple Crumble—a comforting classic that tastes like the very best of early autumn.



Blackberry & Apple Crumble Bake using your foraged fruit



Ingrediants

For the fruit filling:

- 2 large cooking apples (peeled, cored and chopped)
- 200g fresh blackberries
- •2-3 tbsp soft brown sugar
- •½ tsp ground cinnamon

For the crumble topping:

- •100g plain flour
- •75g rolled oats
- •75g cold butter (cut into cubes)
- •75g soft brown sugar

Method

Method

- 1. Preheat the oven to 180°C (160°C fan) / Gas Mark 4.
- 2. Prepare the fruit: In a large bowl, mix the chopped apples, blackberries, sugar, and cinnamon. Tip into an ovenproof dish and spread evenly.

- 3. Make the crumble: In a separate bowl, rub the butter into the flour using your fingertips until it looks like breadcrumbs (kids usually love this part!). Stir in the oats and sugar.
- 4. Top the fruit: Sprinkle the crumble mixture evenly over the fruit filling.
- 5. Bake for 35-40 minutes, until the topping is golden and the fruit is bubbling around the edges.
- 6. Cool slightly, then serve warm with custard, cream, or a scoop of local vanilla ice cream.

Top tip for little helpers:

Let them wash the berries, mix the filling, and sprinkle the crumble. Just be prepared for a few to disappear during prep! Local twist: If you have windfall apples from your garden or a neighbour's tree—use them! This recipe is all about simple, seasonal goodness.





Spice Up Your October:

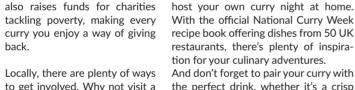
Celebrate National Curry Week

It's that delicious time of year again! From 6th to 12th October, the UK celebrates National Curry Week, a week dedicated to one of Britain's favourite cuisines. Whether you're a die-hard curry fan or just fancy trying something new, this is the perfect excuse to indulge in bold flavours and support local restaurants at the same time.

Started back in 1998, National

Curry Week has grown into a nationwide celebration of South Asian cuisine-and it's about more than just food. The event also raises funds for charities tackling poverty, making every curry you enjoy a way of giving

to get involved. Why not visit a nearby curry house for a meal



the perfect drink, whether it's a crisp lager, a fruity wine, or even a traditional lassi. For those who love sharing their experiences, the week is also a great chance to join the online community, show off your creations, and connect with curry fans across the country using #NationalCurryWeek.

or takeaway? Supporting our local res-

taurants not only treats your taste buds

but also helps the community thrive. If

you're feeling creative, you could even

From classic Chicken Tikka Masala to regional Indian specialities. National Curry Week is all about enjoying flavours, having fun, and supporting good causes. So, why not treat yourself this October and make it a week to remember?

For more information, check out nationalcurryweek.co.uk.









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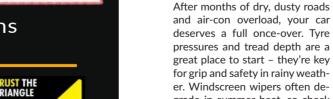
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If your brakes have been a bit

As the school term is in full swing

and the days gradually shorten,

October is the perfect time to

give your car a little post-summer

TLC. Whether you've clocked

up the miles on a staycation,

commuted through the heat, or

simply put off that long-overdue

service, now's the time to pre-

pare your vehicle for the wetter,

darker months to come.

End-of-Summer Check-Up

squeaky or spongy, book in for a check before autumn's damp roads make stopping distances longer. A garage can also inspect your battery, as colder starts tend to highlight weaknesses.



September is one of the UK's busiest months for MOTs, especially for vehicles registered in the spring. Beat the rush and book early - many local garages offer a free retest or lovalty discounts if you book ahead.

New Plate Season

September also brings the new '75' registration plates. Whether you're buying or just browsing, now's the time when forecourts are full of deals. Many dealers offer

part-exchange incentives and finance packages to make room for the latest arrivals. Even if vou're not buving new, this month often sees a flurry of nearly-new cars hitting the second-hand market at great value.

Drive Smarter, Not Harder If rising fuel costs are on your radar, consider ways to drive more efficiently. Lighten your load, check tyre inflation weekly, and avoid excessive idling. Even small changes can make a big difference over time - and your wallet will thank you.

This month's motoring tip: Always carry a torch, high-vis jacket, and basic emergency kit. September is often when roadside conditions change be prepared.



October Motoring Ready for the Road Ahead

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FREE Skills Bootcamps: Building Worcestershire's future workforce



Skills Bootcamps are free flexible courses for people aged 19+ and the aim is to help people gain #SkillsForLife. They're free to do, they don't impact benefit claims, and businesses can take advantage of them too!

Skills Bootcamps provide people with the opportunity to improve sector-specific skills in order to either enhance their current career or give them the confidence, and the skills to change career direction.

They are fully funded by the Department for Education and codelivered by Worcestershire County Council through it's Careers Worcestershire service. They work with further education and training providers, plus local businesses. to offer a variety of Skills Bootcamps that take place at training provider locations and education settings all across Worcestershire such as Kidderminster College, GLP Training & Adult Learning

The skills provided by a Skills Bootcamp can act as a foundation for further study or boost your career prospects.

They can increase employment chances and open new doors for future training opportunities, or they can give you the skills and confidence to change career.

Skills Bootcamps are free to do and, upon completion gain you a fast-track interview with a local employer.

The range of Skills Bootcamps that are available include ones in Construction skills, Cyber Security, Playwork, Decorating, Plumbing, Leadership and Management, Welding, Warehousing, Hairdressing, Nursing, Early Years, Teaching Assistant, Health & Social Care plus many more, Contact Skills Bootcamps for a full list.

Skills Bootcamps Worcestershire covers a variety industries and are free for individuals aged 19+. Bespoke 'Bootcamps' can be created for local employers looking to upskill their workforce.

Aged 19+? Why should you do a <u>free</u> Skills Bootcamp in Worcestershire..?







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