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From Local Park to National Stage Volunteers Celebrate Triple Recognition

A dedicated team of community volunteers from Friends of Wollescote Park is celebrating an extraordinary summer after receiving recognition from expert judges, thousands of members of the public and the national Green Flag Award Scheme.

The volunteer-led group has achieved a remarkable trio of honours: a Platinum Award at

BBC Gardeners' World Live 2026, Runner-up in the People's Choice Award, and the retention of the Community Green Flag Award for the fourth consecutive year.

Held annually at the NEC Birmingham, BBC Gardeners' World Live attracts around 90,000 visitors over four days and is one of the UK's most

prestigious horticultural events. Friends of Wollescote Park's exhibit in the Beautiful Borders category, "Composition in the Park," received the show's highest accolade when it was awarded Platinum by the judging panel. The award was presented by BBC Gardeners' World presenter Sue Kent.

The celebrations continued when "Composition in the Park" was named Runner-up in the People's Choice Award, following votes from visitors to the show and members of the local community who had followed the project on social media. The award-winning border celebrated the remarkable story of Dorothy Howell, the internationally acclaimed composer who once lived at Wollescote House overlooking the park. In 1919, Dorothy broke through the barriers of her time when her orchestral work *Lamia* was performed at the Proms, becoming one of Britain's most celebrated female composers. Inspired by Dorothy's determination, Friends of Wollescote



Park created a garden that tells her story through planting, craftsmanship and community spirit. Designed and built entirely by volunteers, it demonstrated how local people can achieve extraordinary things when they work together.

The success has continued with Wollescote Park Sensory Garden retaining its Community Green Flag Award for the fourth consecutive year. The award recognises welcoming, well-managed green spaces supported by their local communities.

Commenting on this year's awards, Paul Todd MBE, Green Flag Award Scheme Manager at Keep Britain Tidy, said: "Parks are essential public spaces that support wellbeing, our communities and our economy. Wollescote Park's Sensory Garden Community Green Flag Award demonstrates what

can be achieved when green spaces are managed to a high standard by dedicated volunteers. Congratulations to everyone involved."

Julia Marks, Chair of Friends of Wollescote Park, said:

"These awards belong to every volunteer who has given their time, skills and enthusiasm to improve our park. To receive the highest award from the judges at Gardeners' World Live, be recognised by the visiting public through the People's Choice Award and retain our Community Green Flag Award for a fourth consecutive year is something we never imagined. Dorothy Howell's story reminds us that determination and community spirit can achieve remarkable things. We hope our success inspires others to get involved and make a difference."

The story does not end at Gar-

deners' World Live. The award-winning "Composition in the Park" garden will now be recreated in Wollescote Park, creating a lasting legacy to celebrate Dorothy Howell while providing a beautiful new space for residents and visitors to enjoy.

Friends of Wollescote Park is inviting local residents to visit the park, celebrate these achievements and see the difference volunteers are making. New volunteers are always welcome. The group meets every Tuesday morning in the Sensory Garden, while the popular Friday morning Pop-up Café continues throughout the school holidays.

From a local park to the national stage, Friends of Wollescote Park has shown what can be achieved when a community comes together. Recognition from expert judges, the public and the Green Flag Award Scheme has made 2026 a truly unforgettable year and created a lasting legacy for the whole community.



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Local comedian launches debut solo Stand-up show in Wollaston

A new local comedy show is set to bring plenty of laughs to Wollaston this September as aspiring stand-up comedian Shadow launches their first solo performance.

Titled with the tongue-in-cheek tagline, "It's finally happening! I'm launching my stand-up career with my own solo show... with a twist... I'm sitting down!", the evening promises a mix of sharp observations, heartfelt storytelling and plenty of humour.

Taking inspiration from comedy greats including Dave Allen,

Ricky Gervais and Peter Kay, the show blends quiet, armchair-style storytelling with energetic rants about the absurdities of everyday life. Audiences can expect tales of family, friendships, working-class life and personal experiences of navigating gender and sexuality, all delivered with honesty, warmth and wit.

Shadow said: "If you want to write comedy, all you have to do is look around you – and you can either burst into tears or highlight how darkly hilarious it all is. I prefer the latter!"

The performance aims to entertain while offering relatable moments that will leave audiences laughing, reflecting and perhaps recognising a little of themselves along the way.

The show takes place on Friday, 5 September at Wollaston Village Hall, Bridgnorth Road, Stourbridge, DY8 3SN. Doors open at 6.30pm, with the performance starting at 7pm.

Tickets are £5.

To book or find out more, contact Shadow on: 07906763475 or email: laura.l.liptrot@gmail.com.

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Returning to School

Helping Your Child Make a Positive Start

The beginning of a new school year is an exciting time, but it can also bring worries and uncertainty for many children. Whether they are starting a new school, moving into a different year group, or simply returning after the summer holidays, a little preparation can make all the difference.

Talk and Listen:

Take time to talk with your child before term begins. Encourage them to share any concerns as well as the things they are looking forward to. Listening calmly and offering reassurance helps children feel understood and supported.

Get Back Into Routine:

A few days before school starts, begin returning to a regular routine. Earlier bedtimes, healthy meals and organising school equipment in advance can reduce last-minute stress and help the first morning run more smoothly.

Focus on More Than Grades:

Rather than focusing solely on academic success, remind your child that effort, kindness and a willingness to learn are just as important. Every child develops at their own pace, and confidence grows when they feel encouraged rather than compared with others.

Managing First-Day Nerves:

If your child is feeling anxious, acknowledge those feelings without dismissing them. Let them know that many children feel nervous at the start of a new term and that these feelings usually lessen once familiar routines return.

A Fresh Start:

Finally, celebrate the opportunities a new school year brings. New friendships, new experiences and new achievements all begin with that first step through the school gates.

With patience, encouragement and positive support from home, parents can help their children begin the new school year with confidence and optimism.

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THIS MONTHS

Local Lowdown Quirky Tales & Local Lore

The Glassmaker's Lucky Penny!

One of Stourbridge's best-loved local tales tells of a glassmaker who always carried a lucky penny in his pocket while working. Fellow craftsmen believed it brought good fortune and prevented valuable pieces from cracking in the furnace. Whether fact or folklore, the story reflects the pride and traditions that made Stourbridge world-famous for its glassmaking.



The Clock That Never Seemed to Agree!

Older residents often recall comparing their watches with one of Stourbridge's public clocks, only to discover it seemed to gain or lose a few minutes every week. Friendly debates over the "correct" time became a regular part of shopping trips into town, and the slightly unreliable clock earned an affectionate place in local memory.



The Railway Whistle Everyone Knew!

When steam trains regularly passed through Stourbridge, families living nearby could often tell the time simply by listening for the familiar whistle. Children would stop playing to wave at passing engines, while commuters knew exactly when to leave home. Although steam has long disappeared, many residents still remember the distinctive sound echoing through the valley.



The Market Pigeon That Became Famous!

For several years, traders at Stourbridge Market spoke fondly of a particularly fearless pigeon that wandered between stalls greeting shoppers in search of crumbs. It became such a familiar sight that many stallholders claimed it was almost part of the workforce. Visitors would often ask if the bird was around, turning it into an unexpected local celebrity.



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Prepare Your Home for Autumn and Beyond with Cousins Furniture

As Autumn begins, it brings the perfect opportunity to refresh your home and prepare for the cosy season ahead. Cousins Furniture are excited to unveil their latest collections, now gracing their showrooms with fresh styles and designs to elevate your home for the season.

Autumn Arrivals and Seasonal Updates

Step into Autumn with confidence by exploring new collections. From comfy recliner sofas to stylish dining sets and beautiful bedroom furniture, Cousins' latest arrivals offer something for every taste and need. Their showrooms are brimming with inspiration, helping you create a space that reflects the warmth and beauty of the season.

Plan Ahead for Christmas

We know you might not even be thinking of Christmas just yet, but as the festive season approaches, planning ahead is key. If you're eyeing made-to-order items for Christmas, now is the perfect time to place your orders and guarantee pre-Christmas delivery, ensuring your home is beautifully

furnished and ready for family gatherings.

Hosting and Entertaining Made Easy

Autumn and Winter are wonderful times for hosting and entertaining, and Cousins are here to help. Whether you need versatile sofa beds for guest sleepovers, ample dining chairs or extending tables for large family meals, Cousins have you covered.

As many nights will be spent settling down on the sofa, comfortable seating does not go amiss. If you are looking to give your living room a restyle, Cousins offer a range of recliner sofas, chairs and corner groups.

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Cousins Furniture understands the importance of having everything you need in one place. Their extensive range includes living, dining and bedroom furniture, as well as home accessories to complete your look. Plus, the Cousins Flooring department can meet your flooring needs, whether it's for a living space, dining room, bedroom, hallway, kitchen or staircase. For those who need

immediate solutions, Cousins offer express delivery on a wide range of best-sellers, with stock carefully managed for quick turnaround times.

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For even greater value, explore Cousins Outlet for savings on brand-new furniture. The Outlet is stocked with a variety of out-of-box deals and special promotions available online and in-store while stocks last, with the added benefit of express delivery.

As you prepare for Autumn and the festive season, let Cousins Furniture be your go-to destination for all your home furnishing needs.

Visit Today

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Cat Eccles Member of Parliament for Stourbridge

Summer has been another busy period so far, with plenty of opportunities to meet local people, celebrate our area's strengths and hear directly about the issues that matter most to residents.

One of the highlights was welcoming Industry Minister Chris McDonald MP to Stourbridge. Together we visited the Stourbridge Glass Museum to showcase the craftsmanship and innovation that have made our town world famous before meeting local steel businesses to discuss the future of manufacturing. Our industrial heritage remains one of our greatest assets, and I will continue championing the skilled jobs and businesses that underpin our local economy.

Supporting vibrant town centres has also remained a priority. I recently joined local PCSOs for walkabouts at Ryemarket in Stourbridge and Brierley Hill Market, speaking with traders, shoppers and residents about community safety and the challenges facing

our high streets. Hearing these experiences firsthand helps inform my work with West Midlands Police and local partners to make our communities safer and more welcoming.

This month also gave me the opportunity to meet some truly inspiring local people. I was delighted to visit Dudley Adult and Community Learning's award-winning Comm-Cast Project, where I recorded a podcast with learners developing media and communication skills through an innovative programme supporting neurodiverse adults. Listening to their experiences was a real privilege, and I thoroughly enjoyed answering their questions about public life and representing our community in Parliament.

I also enjoyed spending an evening with members of the Rotary Club of Stourbridge. It was a pleasure to share more about my journey to becoming an MP, the work that takes place behind the

scenes in Westminster and the constituency, and some of the campaigns I've been pursuing on behalf of local residents. My thanks go to Andy, Tina, Liz and everyone at the club for such a warm welcome and engaging discussion.

Alongside my constituency work, I welcomed the return of the £2 single bus fare cap, the removal of VAT from domestic electricity bills and a 20% reduction in business rates for pubs, clubs and live music venues, providing practical support for households while helping businesses across our high streets thrive. I will continue to push for more measures to support individuals and businesses in Stourbridge, Brierley Hill and Netherton.

Over the coming weeks, I'll continue holding coffee mornings across the constituency. These informal events are a fantastic chance to raise local issues, ask questions or simply stop by for a chat, so please keep an eye on my social media channels for upcoming dates and locations.

Whether we've met at a community event, on a market walkabout or during one of my visits across the constituency, thank you to everyone who has taken the time to share your views with me. Your feedback continues to shape the work I do both locally and in Parliament, and I look forward to seeing many more of you over the summer.

You can contact Cat via email, telephone or online:

Email:
cat.eccles.mp@parliament.uk

Phone:
01384 881 095

Website: www.cateccles.co.uk



Future of Stourbridge Glass Museum Under Threat as Rising Costs Bite

One of Stourbridge's most important cultural attractions is facing an uncertain future, with the team behind the Glass Museum warning that rising operating costs are putting the museum at risk.

The Glass Museum, which opened in 2022 on the historic former Stuart Crystal Glass Factory site, was created to

preserve and celebrate more than 400 years of Stourbridge's world-famous glassmaking heritage. Built through a £6 million regeneration project, the museum has become a popular destination for visitors, school groups and glass enthusiasts from across the country.

However, despite its success, museum leaders say increas-

ing energy bills, staffing costs and day-to-day expenses mean its long-term future cannot be taken for granted.

Museum Director Alexander Goodger said the attraction receives no regular funding from either local or national government and instead relies almost entirely on the income it generates itself.

"We don't get any local government funding, we don't get any national government funding," he explained. "We're reliant on self-generated income through admissions, events, visitor numbers and the business units we rent out. We really need support over the next couple of years if we're to continue here as a museum."

The museum tells the story of Stourbridge's internationally renowned glass industry, which helped shape the town's identity and economy for centuries. Visitors can explore historic exhibits, watch live glassmaking demonstrations and discover the



skilled craftsmanship that made Stourbridge glass famous around the world.

Plans also exist to open underground tunnels where glass was once produced, offering visitors an even greater insight into the town's industrial past. However, the museum says it currently cannot afford the additional staffing required to safely open these areas.

The challenges facing the Glass Museum reflect a wider crisis across the heritage sector. Several major glass attractions have faced financial difficulties in recent years, with museums and manufacturers battling soaring energy costs and reduced public funding. Independent glass artists based at the Stourbridge museum have also been affected, with some seeing their gas bills increase dramatically as energy prices have risen.

Mr Goodger believes protecting the museum is about far more

than preserving a building. "Hopefully our story inspires enough people to come and visit, but it's one that relies on people remaining interested in the heritage that is here locally," he said. "It would be terrible if these stories were locked away and no one could come and see them."

How You Can Help:

The future of the Glass Museum depends heavily on public support. There are several simple ways local people can help ensure this unique attraction continues to thrive:

- Visit the museum and encourage friends and family to do the same.
- Attend one of the museum's exhibitions, workshops or special events.
- Buy gifts or locally made glass from the museum shop.
- Enjoy refreshments in the café during your visit.

- Become a volunteer if you have time to spare.

- Make a donation or support any future fundraising campaigns.
- Spread the word on social media and recommend the museum to visitors coming to Stourbridge.

The Government has announced £1.6 billion of support for museums nationally and says additional assistance is available to help organisations manage rising energy costs. However, for attractions like the Glass Museum, continued support from local residents and visitors remains essential.

For a town whose name is recognised around the globe because of its glass-making history, the museum is far more than a tourist attraction. It is a living reminder of the industry that helped put Stourbridge on the map and one many local people will hope can continue inspiring future generations.

Find out more at:
www.stourbridgeglassmuseum.org.uk





Golf Marathon Raises Nearly £2000 For Prostate Cancer UK

A determined young golfer from Stourbridge is on course to raise almost £2,000 for Prostate Cancer UK after completing an incredible 14-hour golfing challenge at Stourbridge Golf Club.

Seventeen-year-old George Evans, an apprentice greenkeeper at the club, teamed up with colleague Sean Gill to take part in The Big Golf Race, raising vital funds and awareness for prostate cancer – a disease that affects one in eight men during their lifetime and remains the only major cancer without a national screening programme.

Setting off at 4.30am, the pair spent more than 14 hours on the course, walking over 42 miles, taking more than 60,000 steps,

playing 100 holes and hitting around 400 shots before finally sinking their last putt.

George said he was inspired to take on the challenge after seeing the impact prostate cancer can have on families.

"I've been aware of the impact of prostate cancer from an early age and wanted to do something to help," he said.

"Golf is a huge part of my life, both playing and working on the course, so it felt like the perfect way to raise money for a great cause. Sean was happy to join me, and together we took on the biggest charity challenge we've ever attempted.

"It was incredibly tough. The physical effort was much harder

than we expected, and at one point even our golf buggy rolled into a bunker. But knowing we've nearly raised £2,000 has made every step worthwhile."

The fundraising effort was backed by Stourbridge-based Kendrick Homes, whose staff donated generously and welcomed the pair back to the 18th green as they completed their fifth and final round after an exhausting day on the course.

Anyone wishing to support the pair's fundraising can visit the Back 9 Bandits fundraising page at:

www.biggolfrace.prostatecanceruk.org/teams/back-9-bandits.



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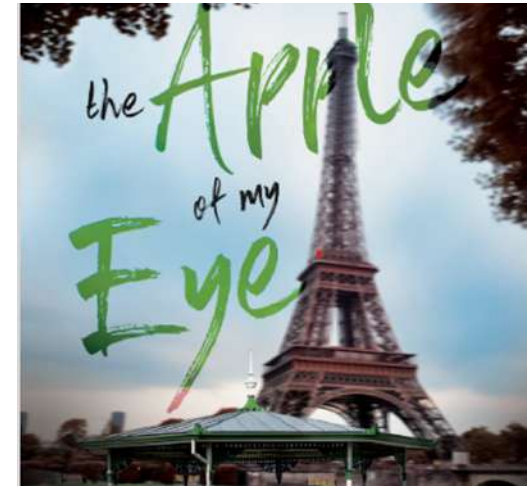
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Never Too Late: Stourbridge Women Sees Her First Novel Published at 69

For Jane Dimmick, writing a novel was something she had always dreamed of doing. But, like so many of us, life got in the way. Now, at the age of 69, Jane is about to see that long-held ambition become a reality, with her first novel, *The Apple of My Eye*, due to be published on 27th August.

Jane moved to Stourbridge in 2018 following the loss of her husband, with her two children having grown up and left home. What could have been a difficult new chapter in her life has instead seen her become very much part of the local community. She is a member of two U3A groups, taking part in Advanced French and Spanish Conversation, belongs to a reading group at Stourbridge Library, volunteers at Mary Stevens Hospice and sings with Stourbridge Choir and Orchestra, where she is also a Trustee and Honorary Secretary. But it was writing that had

always been in the back of her mind. "I have always loved reading and loved writing my own stories as a child," says Jane. "For as long as I can remember I have wanted to write a book."

The idea was put aside as Jane went to university, started work, married and raised her family. It wasn't until around ten to twelve years ago, after losing her husband and with her children having begun their own lives, that she found herself with more time to return to writing.

She began putting the story that had been developing in her head onto paper, although progress was slow while she was still working. Even then, publication wasn't necessarily part of the plan. It was her family, and particularly her sister after reading the manuscript, who encouraged her to see if she could get the novel published. That encouragement has now paid off.

The Apple of My Eye is contemporary fiction telling the story of a woman who meets the man of her dreams, only to lose him tragically. Forced to pick up the pieces, a series of chance meetings and a startling discovery lead her down an unexpected and sometimes difficult path towards a second chance at happiness. The novel explores love, loss, friendship and finding hope after despair. Although it isn't autobiographical, Jane has drawn on some of her own experiences and used locations she knows well.

The Apple of My Eye by Jane Dimmick is available from Waterstones, Foyles, Amazon and publisher Pegasus.

For someone who once simply wanted to write a book for her own pleasure, Jane is now about to hold her very own published novel in her hands and it all began with a story that had been waiting patiently to be told.

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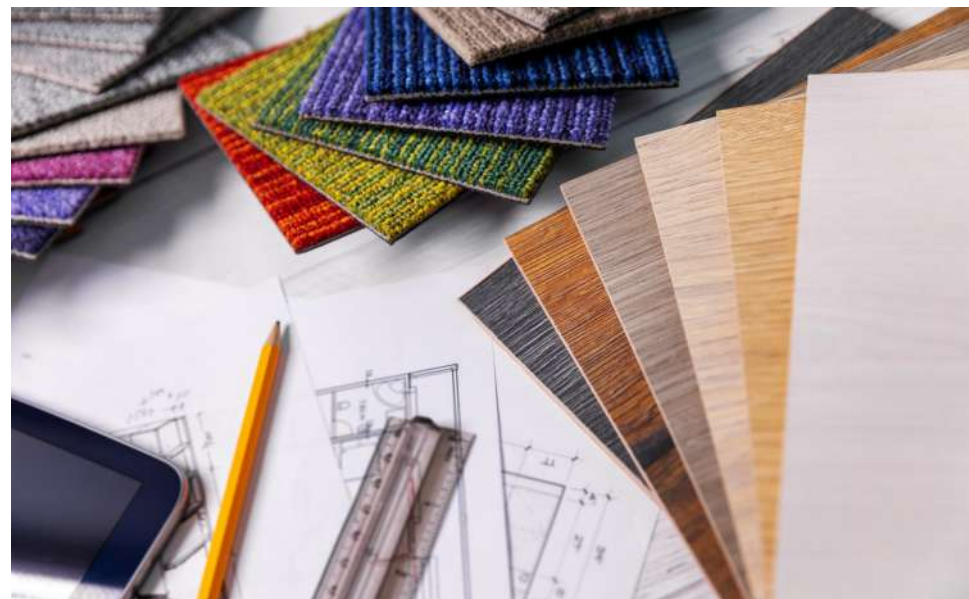


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Choosing the Perfect Flooring for Every Room in Your Home



Flooring plays a huge role in the overall look and feel of your home. It needs to be practical enough for everyday life while complementing your interior style, making it one of the most important decisions when updating any room.

Carpet remains a favourite for bedrooms and living rooms thanks to its warmth, comfort and excellent sound insulation. Available in countless colours and textures, modern carpets are more durable than ever and can add a cosy feel that's perfect for relaxing spaces.

Luxury Vinyl Tile (LVT) has become one of the fastest-growing flooring choices in recent years. Designed to replicate the appearance of wood or stone, it's

waterproof, highly durable and easy to maintain, making it ideal for kitchens, bathrooms and busy family homes.

Laminate flooring continues to offer great value for money. Modern designs are incredibly realistic and resistant to everyday wear, making laminate a popular choice for hallways, dining rooms and home offices. For those seeking timeless elegance, engineered wood flooring combines the beauty of real timber with greater stability than solid wood. It adds warmth and character to almost any room while increasing the appeal of your home.

Tiles remain the go-to choice for bathrooms, utility rooms and kitchens thanks to their durabil-

ity and water resistance. Available in a huge range of finishes, they can create everything from a sleek contemporary look to a rustic country feel.

Before making your decision, think about how each room is used. Homes with pets, young children or high footfall may benefit from more hard-wearing materials, while bedrooms often prioritise comfort underfoot.

The right flooring should strike a balance between style, durability and practicality. By choosing materials that suit your lifestyle as well as your décor, you'll create a home that's not only beautiful but built to stand the test of time.



September in the Vegetable Garden

What to Plant, Harvest and Prepare

September is one of the most rewarding months in the vegetable garden. While many summer crops are reaching the end of their season, there's still plenty to harvest, and now is the perfect time to prepare for the months ahead. A little effort now can keep your garden productive well into autumn and provide a head start for next spring.

Tomatoes, runner beans, courgettes and peppers are often still producing, while pumpkins and squash begin to ripen ready for harvesting later in the month. Sweetcorn should be ready to pick once the kernels release a milky liquid when pressed, and maincrop potatoes can be lifted once the foliage has died back. It's also an ideal time to sow hardy vegetables that will provide fresh produce during the cooler months. Spinach, spring

onions, winter lettuce and oriental leaves can all be sown now, while overwintering onion sets and garlic can be planted towards the end of the month in well-drained soil.

As beds begin to empty, remove old crops and weeds before digging in plenty of garden compost or well-rotted manure. This improves soil structure and replaces nutrients that have been used throughout the growing season. If a bed won't be used until spring, consider sowing a green manure such as grazing rye or field beans to protect the soil and naturally improve fertility.

Keep watering where necessary, particularly if September remains warm and dry, although cooler nights usually mean plants require less moisture than

during the height of summer. Continue harvesting little and often to encourage crops such as beans and courgettes to keep producing for as long as possible.

Protect ripening pumpkins and squash by placing them on a piece of wood or slate to keep them off damp soil, helping prevent rot. Net brassicas if pigeons become a problem, and keep an eye out for slugs, which often become more active as the weather cools.

September marks the transition between seasons, but it's far from the end of the gardening year. With regular harvesting, a little maintenance and some timely planting, your vegetable garden can continue to provide an abundance of fresh, home-grown produce long after summer has faded.

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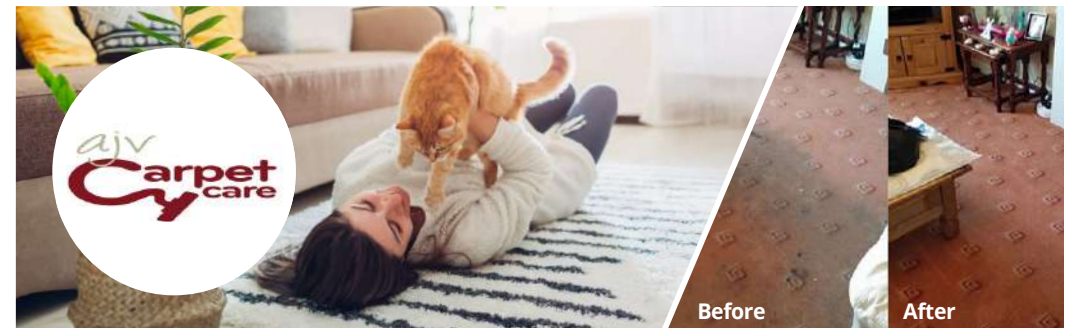


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Maximise Your Kitchen Space With Clever Storage



A well-organised kitchen can make everyday life easier, whether you're preparing family meals or entertaining friends. The good news is that creating more storage doesn't always require a costly renovation. A few clever changes can help maximise every inch of space while keeping worktops clutter-free. Start by making the most of your cupboards. Pull-out shelves and drawer organisers make it easier to reach items stored at the back, while stackable shelves allow you to use the full height of your cabinets. Clear storage containers are another popular choice, keeping dry foods fresh while making it easy to see exactly what you have.

Vertical storage is often overlooked. Wall-mounted rails, magnetic knife strips and hang-

ing utensil racks free up valuable drawer space while keeping everyday essentials within easy reach. Inside cupboard doors, slim racks can store spices, chopping boards or cleaning products without taking up additional room.

Deep drawers are becoming increasingly popular in modern kitchens, replacing traditional lower cupboards. They provide easier access to pots, pans and small appliances, reducing the need to crouch down and search through cluttered cupboards. A pantry, whether it's a dedicated room or simply a tall cabinet, is another excellent investment. Adjustable shelving allows you to customise the space, while labelled baskets help separate snacks, baking ingredients and canned goods.

Don't forget awkward corners. Carousel units and pull-out corner systems transform previously wasted space into practical storage that can hold everything from cookware to food supplies. Finally, be honest about what you really need. Regularly decluttering your kitchen and donating rarely used gadgets creates valuable space for the items you use every day.

The best kitchens aren't necessarily the biggest—they're simply organised well. By combining clever storage solutions with thoughtful organisation, you can create a kitchen that's easier to use, more enjoyable to cook in and far less stressful to keep tidy. Sometimes, it's the simplest changes that make the biggest difference.



From Fitness Instructor to Midlife Women's Health Specialist: Meet Sandra Todd

When Sandra Todd first stepped into the health and wellness world back in 2006 as a Rosemary Conley diet and fitness instructor, she had no idea it would be the start of a 20-year journey that would lead her to become one of the Wyre Forest's go-to specialists in metabolic health for midlife women and beyond.

"I've always believed that food should be something to enjoy, not something to fear," says Sandra, founder of Sandra Todd Nutrition. "So much of the advice out there for women in midlife is about restriction and cutting things out. I wanted to offer something different practical, food-first support that actually fits into real life."

That philosophy has been shaped by nearly two decades of hands-on experience. Sandra holds two Master's degrees one in Exercise and Nutrition Science from the University of Chester, and one in Nutritional Therapy, awarded with distinction, from the University of Worcester- and is registered with both BANT and CNHC. In between, she spent three years delivering the NHS diabetes prevention programme across Warwickshire, Worcestershire and Herefordshire, and worked with a private company developing continuous glucose monitoring technology, creating educational content and supporting research along the way.

Sandra has continued to build on that foundation ever since. She's a qualified nutrigenomics practitioner, meaning she can look at how a client's genetics influence their nutritional needs, and offers functional testing including stool, saliva,



urine, allergy, genetic and blood testing to get a clearer, more personalised picture of what's really going on in the body. She also provides tailored supplement recommendations, carefully checked against any medications a client is taking to avoid contraindications, and has recently trained to support cancer patients through nutrition, adding another layer to the care she can offer clients.

Today, Sandra's practice focuses on supporting midlife women and beyond helping them navigate the metabolic changes that come with perimenopause, menopause, and the years that follow, a stage of life she believes is too often overlooked or dismissed. "Women come to me feeling like their body has changed overnight

and nobody can tell them why. My job is to help them understand what's actually happening metabolically, and give them a plan that works with their body, not against it whatever stage of midlife they're at."

As well as one-to-one consultations, Sandra runs a Wellness Club offering twice-weekly group sessions and talks, and a hands-on Cooking Club designed to make healthy eating feel achievable rather than overwhelming.

She's a familiar face on the local speaking circuit too, having delivered menopause talks for Worcestershire Fire Brigade, Worcestershire Police, Worcestershire County Council and care homes across Kidderminster and Dudley, as well as a

bone health talk for the Royal Osteoporosis Society.

This year marks a milestone for the business: Sandra has moved into her own dedicated studio at Suite 44, Anglo House on Worcester Road, Stourport-on-Severn a light, ground-floor space with free parking, where she now runs all her consultations, classes and courses under one roof.

"Twenty years in, and I still love this work as much as ever," she adds. "Watching a client go from feeling confused and unheard to feeling in control of their health again that never gets old."

Get in touch Sandra Todd Nutrition Suite 44, Anglo House, Worcester Road, Stourport-on-Severn www.sandratoddnutrition.co.uk email- support@sandratoddnutrition.co.uk

National Eye Health Week

Why Looking After Your Eyes Matters More Than Ever



Our eyesight is something many of us take for granted until we notice a problem. Whether it's struggling to read small print, experiencing headaches after hours in front of a screen, or finding it harder to drive at night, changes in vision can have a significant impact on everyday life. That's why National Eye Health Week, taking place from 21-27 September, is an important reminder to make eye care a priority. The annual campaign encourages people of all ages to adopt healthier habits, attend regular eye examinations and recognise the importance of protecting one of our most valuable senses. An eye test is about much more

than checking whether you need glasses. During a routine examination, optometrists can detect early signs of several serious eye conditions, including glaucoma, cataracts and age-related macular degeneration. Many of these conditions develop gradually and may not cause noticeable symptoms in their early stages, making regular check ups essential.

Eye examinations can also reveal signs of wider health problems such as diabetes, high blood pressure and raised cholesterol. In some cases, changes in the blood vessels at the back of the eye may be among the first indicators that something isn't quite

right elsewhere in the body. Early detection often leads to more effective treatment and better long-term outcomes.

One of the biggest challenges to eye health today is the amount of time we spend looking at digital screens. Computers, smartphones, tablets and televisions are now part of everyday life for work, education and entertainment. While screens do not permanently damage eyesight, they can contribute to digital eye strain, causing symptoms such as tired eyes, blurred vision, headaches, dry eyes and neck or shoulder discomfort.



A simple way to reduce these symptoms is by following the 20-20-20 rule. Every 20 minutes, look at something around 20 feet away for at least 20 seconds. This gives your eye muscles a chance to relax and helps reduce strain. It's also important to blink regularly, as concentrating on screens often reduces our natural blink rate, leading to dry, irritated eyes.

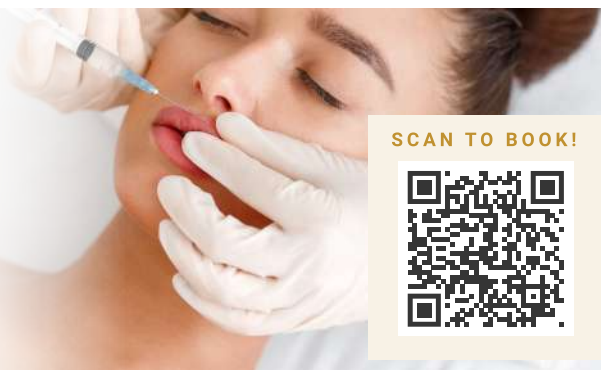
Lifestyle choices also play an important role in maintaining healthy vision. Eating a balanced diet rich in leafy green vegetables, colourful fruits, oily fish, eggs and nuts provides nutrients such as vitamins A, C and E, zinc and omega-3 fatty acids, all of

which support eye health. Staying physically active, maintaining a healthy weight and avoiding smoking can also reduce the risk of developing sight-threatening conditions later in life.

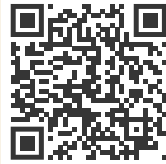
Protecting your eyes from ultraviolet (UV) rays is equally important. Wearing sunglasses with proper UV protection during sunny days helps shield your eyes from harmful radiation, even when it's cloudy. If you work in environments where there is a risk of flying particles or chemicals, appropriate safety eyewear should always be worn. Parents should also remember that children's eyesight develops rapidly during the early years.

Regular eye tests can identify vision problems that may affect learning, confidence and development, often before a child realises anything is wrong.

This National Eye Health Week, take a few moments to think about your own vision. If it's been more than two years since your last eye examination or you've noticed any changes in your sight consider booking an appointment with your local optometrist. Looking after your eyes today can help protect your vision for years to come, allowing you to continue enjoying the people, places and activities that matter most.



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Plum Season Has Arrived Celebrate One of Summer's Sweetest Fruits

As late summer begins to unfold, plum season is in full swing, bringing an abundance of one of Britain's most delicious and versatile fruits. From deep purple Victoria plums to golden Mirabelles and juicy greengages, plums are packed with flavour and make a fantastic addition to both sweet and savoury dishes. British plums are typically harvested between August and September, meaning they are at their freshest, juiciest and most affordable right now.

Buying locally grown fruit not only supports British farmers but also ensures you're enjoying plums at their very best.

Plums are naturally rich in vitamins C and K, as well as fibre and antioxidants, making them a healthy snack that can be enjoyed straight from the fruit bowl. Their natural sweetness

satisfies sugar cravings while providing nutrients that support the immune system, digestion and bone health.

In the kitchen, plums are wonderfully versatile. They can be eaten fresh, stewed for breakfast, baked into crumbles and pies, or transformed into jams, chutneys and sauces. Their sweet-tart flavour pairs beautifully with pork, duck and cheese, making them just as suitable for savoury meals as they are for desserts.

When choosing plums, look for fruit that gives slightly when gently squeezed but isn't overly soft. A fragrant aroma is another sign they're perfectly ripe. If they're still firm, simply leave them at room temperature for a couple of days to develop their full sweetness before storing them in the fridge.

Plum season is relatively short, so it's well worth making the most of these colourful fruits while they're widely available. Whether you're baking for family, preparing a weekend pudding or simply enjoying a healthy afternoon snack, plums offer endless possibilities.

If you're looking for inspiration, you're in luck. Turn the page for our delicious Plum, Hazelnut and Chocolate Cake recipe a rich, indulgent bake that perfectly combines the natural sweetness of seasonal plums with crunchy hazelnuts and luxurious chocolate.

It's the perfect way to celebrate one of the highlights of the British fruit calendar and a guaranteed crowd-pleaser for family and friends alike.



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Plum, Hazelnut & Chocolate Cake



Ingredients

- 175g butter
- 500g plums
- 175g light muscovado sugar
- 175g self-raising flour
- 175g ground hazelnuts
- 3 eggs
- 1 tsp baking powder
- 50g dark chocolate
- 2 tbsp hazelnuts
- 2 tbsp redcurrant or plum jelly

Method

Step 1:

Heat oven to 180C/fan 160C/gas 4. Butter and line the base of a round 20cm cake tin. Halve and stone 4 plums, set aside for later, then roughly chop the remaining plums.

Step 2:

Put the sugar, butter, flour, ground hazelnuts, eggs and baking powder into a large bowl and beat with a wooden spoon or electric hand mixer for 1-2 mins, until smooth and light. Stir in the chopped plums and chocolate, then tip into the prepared cake tin and smooth the top.

Step 3:

Arrange the halved plums over the top of the mixture, pressing them down lightly, then scatter over hazelnuts. Bake for 40-50 mins until the top is golden and the cake feels firm to the touch. Cool in the tin for 10 mins, then turn out, remove the paper and cool on a wire rack. Heat the jelly,

then brush over the top of the cake before serving.



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Celebrate the Music of Phil Collins at Stourbridge Town Hall

Fans of Phil Collins and Genesis are in for a spectacular evening of timeless hits when No Jacket Required, The Phil Collins Tribute brings its 'Both Sides Of The Hits' UK Tour to Stourbridge Town Hall on Saturday 19 September 2026.

Recognised as the UK's longest-running Phil Collins tribute show, No Jacket Required has been entertaining audiences since 2003 with faithful performances of one of Britain's most successful and influential musicians. This brand-new production celebrates the 50th anniversary of the moment Phil Collins stepped from behind the drum kit to become Genesis' lead vocalist, a decision that launched one of the most remarkable careers in music history.

The show takes audiences on a journey through five decades of unforgettable songs, featur-

ing chart-topping hits from both Phil Collins' hugely successful solo career and his years fronting Genesis. Running for almost two and a half hours, the concert is packed with songs that have become the soundtrack to generations.

Expect to hear classics including In The Air Tonight, Against All Odds, Easy Lover, Another Day in Paradise, Invisible Touch, Follow You Follow Me, Sussudio, You Can't Hurry Love, You'll Be In My Heart, and many more.

Fronted by acclaimed performer Dave Whitehouse, the band has earned a reputation for delivering an authentic and energetic tribute, recreating the sound, emotion and atmosphere of Phil Collins' legendary live performances. Their previous tours have sold out venues across the UK, and they return to Stour-

bridge following another hugely successful performance last year. Whether you grew up listening to Phil Collins and Genesis or have discovered their music more recently, this promises to be an evening filled with nostalgia, world-class musicianship and hit after hit.

No Jacket Required, The Phil Collins Tribute comes to Stourbridge Town Hall on Saturday 19 September 2026, with the show starting at 7.30pm.

Tickets are £29.50, and with the band's popularity continuing to grow, early booking is recommended. Don't miss this fantastic celebration of one of the greatest songbooks in British music history.

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Fred Zeppelin Bring the Ultimate Led Zeppelin Experience to Katie Fitzgerald's

Rock fans are in for a legendary night of classic music as Fred Zeppelin take to the stage at Katie Fitzgerald's on Friday 18 September for an evening celebrating one of the greatest rock bands of all time.

Widely regarded as one of the UK's premier Led Zeppelin tribute acts, Fred Zeppelin has spent years building an outstanding reputation for recreating the power, energy and musicianship that made Led Zeppelin global icons. Their incredible live performances have won praise from fans and critics alike, earning them a place among the Top Ten Best Live Bands in a Kerrang! readers' poll an impressive achievement, particularly as they were the only tribute band included.

The band's authenticity has also earned recognition from those closest to the real Led Zeppelin. Frontman Robert Plant has attended three Fred Zeppelin performances over the years, while drummer Jason Bonham, son of the legendary John Bonham, has even joined the band on stage for an unforgettable jam session. Their reputation has also brought them into the company of rock royalty. The band were personally invited by Jimmy Page to attend one of his charity events, where they had the opportunity to meet the iconic guitarist. Other guests at the event included Roger Daltrey, Julian Lloyd Webber, Leo Sayer and Formula One star David Coulthard.

Audiences at Fred Zeppelin concerts never know who they might

spot in the crowd either. Previous performances have attracted famous faces including Bob Catley of Magnum, Mel Galley of Whitesnake, Roy Wood of The Move and Wizzard, and Jimmy Lea of Slade.

Expect an evening packed with Led Zeppelin classics, outstanding musicianship and all the atmosphere of a genuine stadium rock show in the intimate surroundings of Katie Fitzgerald's. Advance tickets are £12.50, with admission £15 on the door (subject to availability). If you love timeless rock anthems, blistering guitar solos and unforgettable live performances, this is a gig not to be missed.

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Dirty/DC Set to Rock The River Rooms This September

AC/DC fans are in for a high-voltage night of classic rock as Dirty/DC, one of Europe's longest-running and most respected AC/DC tribute bands, returns to The River Rooms on Friday 25 September 2026.

Having been performing across the UK and Europe since 1988, Dirty/DC has built an outstanding reputation for delivering an authentic AC/DC experience. Whether you're a lifelong fan who knows every riff and lyric or simply looking for a fantastic night of live music, this is a show guaranteed to have the crowd on its feet.

The band has painstakingly recreated every detail of an AC/DC concert, from the iconic wall of Marshall amplifiers and Angus Young's unmistakable school-

boy outfit to the explosive stage presence and powerful sound that made the Australian rock legends famous around the world.

Most importantly, Dirty/DC captures the energy and excitement of the music itself. Expect more than two hours of non-stop rock featuring all the biggest hits from both the Bon Scott and Brian Johnson eras. Classics such as Highway to Hell, Back in Black, Thunderstruck, You Shook Me All Night Long, T.N.T., Whole Lotta Rosie and many more are all delivered with incredible passion, precision and power.

The event takes place at The River Rooms on Friday 25 September. Doors open at 7.30pm, with the live show beginning at 9.30pm. Tickets are £15 in advance, while any remaining tickets will be £18

on the door, subject to availability.

Young rock fans aged 14 to 17 are welcome when accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, although under-18s must leave once the live music has finished. Free parking is available for River Rooms customers, with visitors simply needing to register their vehicle at the venue on arrival.

If you love loud guitars, unforgettable riffs and one of the greatest rock bands of all time, Dirty/DC promises an electrifying evening that will leave you shouting for an encore. Rock up, turn it up and prepare for a night of pure AC/DC magic.

Buy tickets online at:
www.theriverrooms.com



Kia EV3 The Small SUV Making a Big Impression

The all-new Kia EV3 is one of the most exciting new cars to arrive in 2026, bringing premium electric vehicle technology to a more affordable and practical family SUV. Inspired by its larger sibling, the award-winning EV9, the EV3 combines futuristic styling with impressive range, clever technology and everyday usability.

From the outside, the EV3 stands out thanks to its sharp lines, distinctive LED lighting and bold, modern design. Despite being a compact SUV that's perfectly suited to town driving, it offers plenty of interior space, making it an ideal choice for families, commuters and anyone looking to make the switch to electric. Inside, the cabin feels remarkably upmarket. High-quality materials, comfortable seating and a minimalist dashboard create a clean, relaxing environment. A large

panoramic digital display combines the driver's instruments and infotainment system into one easy-to-use interface, while wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto come as standard on most models.

One of the EV3's biggest strengths is its driving range. Depending on the version you choose, Kia claims a range of up to around 375 miles on a single charge (WLTP), making it one of the longest-range electric cars in its class. Fast-charging capability also means you can top up from 10 to 80 per cent in around half an hour using a suitable rapid charger. On the road, the EV3 is quiet, refined and surprisingly enjoyable to drive. Instant electric power provides brisk acceleration, while the elevated driving position gives excellent

visibility. The suspension has been tuned for comfort, making it equally happy on motorways or navigating Britain's often less-than-perfect roads.

Safety is another area where the EV3 excels. It comes packed with advanced driver assistance features, including adaptive cruise control, lane-keeping assistance, autonomous emergency braking and intelligent parking aids designed to make everyday driving easier and safer.

With competitive pricing, generous equipment levels and Kia's excellent seven-year warranty, the EV3 is set to become one of the standout family cars of the year. For drivers considering their first electric vehicle, or those looking to upgrade to something practical, stylish and economical, the Kia EV3 deserves a place at the very top of the shortlist.

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Glassboys Ready to Make Their Mark This September

There is a renewed sense of optimism around the War Memorial Athletic Ground as Stourbridge FC continue their 2026/27 Southern League Premier Central campaign. With another summer of hard work behind them, the Glassboys are determined to build on last season and challenge towards the top end of the table. The Southern League Premier Central is one of the most competitive divisions in non-league football, featuring several ambitious clubs all with aspirations of promotion. Every fixture presents a different challenge, and consistency will be the key to enjoying a successful campaign.

As September arrives, the season begins to take shape. The opening month has given players and supporters a chance to settle back into the rhythm of Saturday football, but September is often where momentum starts to build. A strong run of results could provide the perfect platform for the months ahead, while home form at the War Memorial Athletic

Ground will once again be crucial.

Manager and players alike know the importance of turning home matches into victories, with the passionate Stourbridge supporters creating one of the best atmospheres in the Southern League. The backing from the terraces has often proved to be the difference in tight contests, and another season of loyal support will be invaluable.

The squad combines experienced heads with exciting young talent, giving supporters plenty to look forward to throughout the campaign. With local pride at stake every time the Glassboys take to the pitch, there is always plenty of entertainment on offer, whether facing promotion hopefuls or local rivals. Beyond the results, Stourbridge FC continues to play an important role within the local community. The club remains

at the heart of the town, bringing together supporters of all ages every fortnight and providing a welcoming matchday experience for families and football fans alike.

As the leaves begin to turn and autumn football returns, September promises to be an exciting month for the Glassboys. Whether you're a regular at the War Memorial Athletic Ground or have never experienced a match before, now is the perfect time to get behind your local club.

With another long season ahead and everything still to play for, Stourbridge FC will be hoping September is the month that sets the tone for a successful campaign. The Glassboys have shown time and again that they can compete with the very best in the division, and supporters will be hoping this season is no different.

Come on you Glassboys!



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