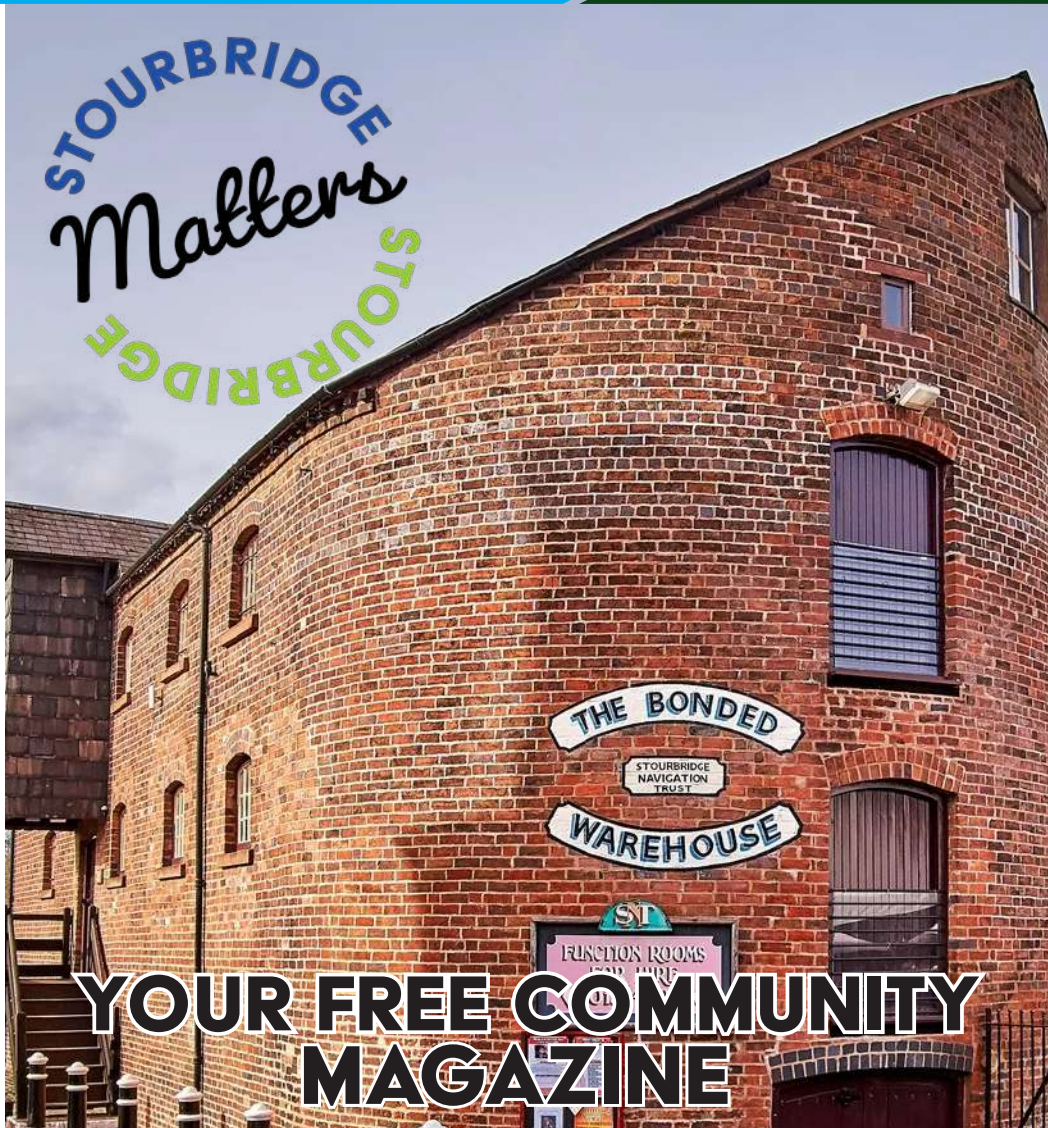


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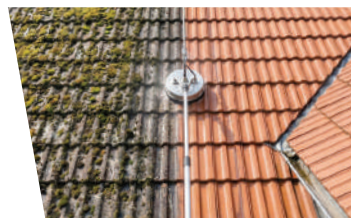


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Advertising Contact:

Andy Preece
07948 720973

Editorial Contact:

info@stourbridgematters.co.uk

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200 Years of Sweet Tradition: Teddy Grays of Dudley & Bewdley



For nearly two centuries, Edward Grays of Dudley – better known locally as Teddy Grays – has been synonymous with traditional sweets and Black Country heritage. Founded in 1826 by John Gray in Dudley, the family-run business is approaching an incredible 200 years of producing classic confectionery using methods that have changed very little over time.

The story began when John Gray travelled around the area by horse and cart buying homemade sweets and selling them to local retailers. Before long, he realised that making his own sweets could be even more successful. From those humble beginnings, the business grew steadily, with each generation helping to shape what would become one of the region's most recognisable confectionery makers.

It was John's son, Edward – affectionately known as "Teddy" – who helped establish the company's reputation. Under his guidance, the business expanded and developed many of the sweets that would become firm favourites across the Midlands. Today, five

generations of the Gray family have worked in the business, continuing a proud tradition of family craftsmanship and keeping traditional sweet-making alive.

Sweets are still produced using traditional techniques, with sugar, water and glucose boiled and carefully worked to create the classic flavours many people remember from childhood. It is this commitment to heritage and craftsmanship that has helped Teddy Grays remain a beloved name throughout the Midlands.

While the heart of the business remains in Dudley, locals in Worcestershire will also recognise the

charming Teddy Grays sweet shop on Load Street in Bewdley. Packed with colourful jars of traditional sweets and nostalgic favourites, the shop has become a popular stop for visitors and residents alike looking to relive the magic of an old-fashioned sweet shop.

As the company celebrates nearly two centuries of sweet making, Teddy Grays continues to prove that some traditions never go out of style. From its historic roots in Dudley to the much-loved shop in Bewdley, the family business remains a proud part of the region's heritage and a reminder of the simple joy of a traditional sweet.





KatiesFest 2026

A 25 Year Celebration of Music at Katie Fitzgerald's

Get ready, Stourbridge – one of the town's most loved live music events is back! KatiesFest 2026 returns to Katie Fitzgerald's from Friday 29th May to Sunday 31st May, promising three unforgettable days of music, community spirit and celebration.

Now firmly established as a highlight in the local calendar, KatiesFest brings together an exciting mix of talented performers from across the region and beyond. From emerging artists to seasoned acts, the festival showcases the very best of grassroots music in an intimate and welcoming setting. Whether you're a regular at Katie's or a first-time visitor, there's something here for everyone.

This year's event is particularly

special, as 2025/26 marks Katie Fitzgerald's 25th anniversary. A cornerstone of Stourbridge's live music scene, the venue has built a reputation for championing independent artists and creating a space where music lovers can come together. KatiesFest 2026 is set to honour that legacy in style, with a packed weekend of performances and a buzzing festival atmosphere throughout.

Saturday's line-up kicks off from 3pm with Son of Stan, followed by a fantastic run of acts including Timothy Parkes, Emma Howett, Kerry Worton and Matt Johnson. The evening ramps up with sets from Eddy Morton and Brian Stone, before closing out with high-energy performances from Birdbrother and NQDY.

Sunday continues the momentum with another full schedule of live music, beginning at 3pm with Joe Zux. The afternoon features a diverse mix of artists including The Clarkes, Kyle Parsons, Mick Brigdale, Tim Isherwood and Tender Comrade. As the evening approaches, expect standout performances from Dove, Ryan, and crowd favourites Shotgun Marmalade. The night builds to a strong finale with Jess Silk, followed by an exciting closing run featuring Dodgy Boilers, Broken Wires, and Bigger Than Seattle.

Across all three days, festivalgoers can expect a relaxed, friendly environment, great drinks, and the unique charm that makes Katie Fitzgerald's such a beloved venue. It's more than just a music festival it's a celebration of local culture, creativity and community.

Make sure you don't miss out on this special 25th anniversary edition of KatiesFest. Gather your friends, soak up the atmosphere and support live music right on your doorstep.

For more information and updates, visit Katie's Secret Garden:
www.katiessecretgarden.com



KatieFest 2026

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May 29th-31st 2026

FRIDAY

- Dodgy Boilers
- Broken Wires
- Bigger Than Seattle

SATURDAY

- Not Quite Dead Yet
- Matt Johnson
- Brian Stone
- Birdbrother
- Sam Draisey
- Eddy Morton
- Emma Howett
- Joe Zux
- Son of Stan
- Kerry Worton

SUNDAY

- Jess Silk
- The Tender Comrades
- Shotgun Marmalade
- Ryan Prazer
- The Dove from above
- Kyle Parsons
- Mick Brigdale
- Tim Isherwood
- The Clarkes
- Timothy Parkes

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THIS MONTHS

Local Lowdown Quirky Tales & Local Lore

Every town has its stories, and Stourbridge is no exception. Beneath the surface of its proud glassmaking heritage lies a collection of curious tales passed down through generations.

One of the most talked about local legends surrounds the old glassworks, where workers once claimed to see mysterious shadows moving through the heat haze long after the furnaces had cooled. Some believed these were the spirits of craftsmen still tending their trade, unwilling to leave behind the industry that defined the town.

Then there is the story of the "lost canal horse" said to wander the towpaths near the Stourbridge Canal on quiet evenings. Locals have reported hearing the soft clip-clop of hooves despite no horse being in sight, a haunting reminder of the canal's working past.

Even the town centre has its quirks. Shop owners have shared tales of unexplained noises and items being mysteriously moved overnight, often laughed off as "just one of those Stourbridge things."

Whether you believe the stories or not, they add a touch of intrigue to everyday life. Next time you are out and about, keep your eyes and ears open you never know what piece of local lore you might uncover.



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A Decade of Telling Local Stories: Mim Celebrates 10 Years in Business

Worcestershire media consultant Miriam Cunliffe is celebrating a major milestone as her business, Miriam Cunliffe Media, marks ten years of helping small businesses share their stories.

Over the past decade, Miriam has supported entrepreneurs across the county by helping them gain visibility through media coverage, photography and strategic publicity. Drawing on her background as a press photographer, she has also con-

nected business owners with photographers, copywriters and reporters – helping their stories reach a wider audience.

To celebrate the anniversary, Miriam recently teamed up with fellow female entrepreneur and photographer Karina O'Neill for a special photoshoot and podcast recording around International Women's Day. The collaboration celebrated the power of women supporting women in business, with the pair first con-

necting through the Women Who Business community.

The recording will feature on Miriam's podcast, Mim's Moments, where the two discuss the importance of community, resilience and storytelling in business.

Miriam said: "Reaching ten years in business is a dream come true. It's been an incredible journey of growth, connection and impact. From my early days focusing on photography to workshops and media advice, my little business has become a big part of my life."

Since launching in 2016, Miriam Cunliffe Media has helped small businesses gain local media exposure through press release writing, photography and storytelling support, alongside workshops and Media Cafés designed to make media more accessible.

To find out more, visit Karina's website at: www.karinaoneillphoto.co.uk or listen to the Mim's Moments podcast on Spotify. Miriam can also be contacted directly at: mcunliffemedia@outlook.com.



Karina O'Neill and Miriam Cunliffe

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Robin Hood Strikes Gold Again

CAMRA Names It Pub of the Year

A popular Amblecote pub is celebrating once again after being named Pub of the Year by the Campaign for Real Ale (CAMRA). The Robin Hood has taken the top spot in the Stourbridge and Halesowen branch awards for 2026, continuing its strong reputation as one of the area's best-loved real ale venues. The award is voted for by CAMRA members and recognises excellence across a range of criteria including beer quality, atmosphere, service and overall experience.

This latest success builds on an already impressive track record,

with the pub having previously won the same accolade in 2024. Known for its welcoming, traditional feel and consistently well-kept ales, the Robin Hood has become a firm favourite with both locals and visitors alike. CAMRA's Pub of the Year awards are highly regarded, with winners progressing through regional stages and potentially onto the national competition. Judges assess everything from the condition of the beer to the warmth of the welcome, making the recognition a real mark of quality.

The Robin Hood stands out not only for its drinks offering but also for its role as a true community hub. With a strong focus on real ale and a friendly atmosphere, it continues to embody the traditional pub experience that CAMRA aims to celebrate and protect.

For Amblecote and the wider Stourbridge area, the award is another reminder of the strength of the local pub scene – and a great excuse to pop in and raise a glass to a well-deserved winner.



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Cat Eccles Member of Parliament for Stourbridge

I'm delighted to contribute a column to the very first edition of Stourbridge Matters. Representing our town in Parliament is both a privilege and a responsibility I take seriously, and at the heart of that responsibility is listening to the people who live and work here.

Over the past month, I've been out and about across Stourbridge, meeting residents, community groups and local organisations to hear directly about the issues that matter most. I was also pleased to welcome the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner, Simon Foster, to the area. Together, we focused on tackling crime, improving police visibil-

ity, and reinforcing neighbourhood policing. I raised with him the concerns many of you have shared—anti-social behaviour, speeding, and the need for a more visible and responsive police presence.

Supporting our local economy remains a key priority. I recently visited Dockworks in Brierley Hill and welcomed Minister for the Arts, Music, the Night-time Economy, Jobs and Tourism for New South Wales, Australia to see first hand the strength of



our area. We know that hospitality and leisure businesses in the area are facing a projected £20,000 increase in business rates over the next three years - these businesses are vital to the character and economy of Stourbridge, and I will continue to press the case for support for them in Parliament. Likewise, I've been working to ensure that local industry is heard at the national level. I recently invited Meridian Steel to Parliament to meet with Minister for Industry, Chris McDonald MP to discuss the downstream steel industry.

Over the next month, I'll be bringing parents and young people together locally, with plans for a roundtable event where parents and young people can share their views and experiences to feed into the Government's SEND reforms. I've also been reaching out to local schools to encourage them to take part in the Government's recently launched consultation on children's digital wellbeing.

On Thursday 7th May, we've local elections across Stourbridge - a reminder that the deadline to register to vote in these in Monday 20th April, so that your voice is heard in these.

You can contact Cat via email, telephone or online:

Email: cat.eccles.mp@parliament.uk

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Discover Stourbridge's Creative Side with the New Art Map



Stourbridge is shining a spotlight on its rich artistic heritage with the launch of a brand-new Art Map celebrating the town's creative community. Officially unveiled in March, the initiative highlights the people, places and stories that make the town such a vibrant hub for creativity.

Designed to encourage residents and visitors alike to explore, the map showcases a wide range of local artists, makers and creative spaces across Stourbridge. From independent studios and galleries to public art and hidden gems, it offers a fresh way to experience the town through an artistic lens. The project is not just about celebrating what already exists it is

also about inspiring new connections. By bringing together creatives from across the area, the Art Map aims to strengthen the local arts scene and make it more accessible to everyone. Whether you are an art enthusiast or simply curious about what is on your doorstep, it is an invitation to see Stourbridge differently.

The launch event brought together artists, organisers and members of the community, marking an exciting step forward for the town's cultural identity. The initiative also reflects Stourbridge's long-standing creative roots, with the area historically known for its craftsmanship and design, particularly in glassmaking.

Importantly for readers, the Art Map is something you can enjoy right now and throughout the coming months. As we move into spring and early summer, it offers the perfect opportunity to get out, explore locally and support independent creatives.

Keep an eye out for copies of the map at local venues and online, and take some time to plan your own creative trail. You might just discover a new favourite artist or a hidden corner of Stourbridge you have never noticed before.



Discover Amateur Radio in Stourbridge A Fresh Start for a Classic Hobby

There's something new happening in Stourbridge for anyone curious about technology, communication, or simply trying something a little different. The Stourbridge and District Amateur Radio Society has officially moved into a new home at Wollescote Scouts Hut – and with it comes a renewed sense of energy, purpose, and opportunity.

Meeting on the first and third Thursday of each month, the group now benefits from a more practical and welcoming space. It's a venue that allows members to get hands-on, whether that's operating equipment, learning new skills, or simply enjoying a relaxed chat with like-minded people. With step free access and accessible facilities, it is also a space designed to be open to everyone. Amateur radio might sound old fashioned, but it remains a fas-

inating and surprisingly modern hobby. Members can communicate across the UK and even around the world, experimenting with voice, digital, and data modes. For some, it is all about the technical side – building and testing equipment, understanding how things work. For others, it is the social side that keeps them coming back. Most find a bit of both.

If you have never tried it before, this is the perfect place to start. You do not need any experience or a licence to come along. Just bring your curiosity and have a go. Members are always happy to guide newcomers, explain how everything works, and even get you on the air during your first visit.

For those who already hold a licence, it is a great way to get ac-

tive again, share knowledge, and be part of a friendly, supportive community. From practical projects to informal challenges, there is always something going on.

The society is keen to welcome new faces of all ages and backgrounds. It is a hobby that rewards patience, sparks curiosity, and builds skills that still matter in today's connected world.

So why not pop along and see what it's all about? You might just discover something new.

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Supporting Our Community When It Matters Most

In every town, there are organisations quietly making a life-changing difference and in our area, the Black Country Foodbank is one of them.

Founded in 2006, the foodbank was set up with a simple but powerful mission: to feed local people in crisis. Nearly two decades on, that mission remains as important as ever. Behind the scenes, a dedicated network of volunteers, donors and community partners are working tirelessly to support individuals and families facing hardship across the Black Country.

The reality is that anyone can find themselves in need of help. Sudden job loss, unexpected bills, illness, or delays in benefits can quickly place people under immense financial pressure. For many, the foodbank provides a vital safety net during these difficult moments offering emergency food supplies designed to last around three days while longer-term support is put in place.

But what makes the Black Country Foodbank stand out is not just the food it's the way people

are treated. Every individual who walks through the door is met with dignity, compassion and respect. There is no judgement, only understanding. In many cases, visitors are also offered a warm drink and a chance to talk, with additional support available through partner organisations to help address the root causes of their situation.

Access to the service is handled through a referral system, working with local agencies such as job centres, family hubs and support services. This ensures that help reaches those who truly need it, while also connecting people to wider advice and guidance that can help them get back on their feet.

Of course, none of this would be possible without the incredible generosity of the local community. Donations of food, toiletries and financial support come from individuals, schools, churches and businesses across the region. From everyday essentials like pasta, tinned goods and cereal to hygiene products and baby items, every contribution plays a part in helping someone through a difficult time.

Volunteers are at the heart of the operation too. From sorting donations at the warehouse to supporting distribution centres, more than 100 people give their time to keep things running



smoothly. Their commitment ensures that help is always there for those who need it most. As the cost of living continues to impact households across the region, the demand for services like the Black Country Foodbank shows no sign of slowing. That makes community support more important than ever. Whether it's donating a few items during your weekly shop, volunteering your time, or simply spreading awareness, everyone can play a role. Because when times get tough, it's the strength of community that makes all the difference.

Need Help?

If you or someone you know is facing a difficult time, help is

available and you are not alone. Black Country Foodbank works alongside local support agencies including Job Centres, family hubs and Citizens Advice to ensure those in genuine need can access emergency food parcels. There are many reasons why someone may require support—unemployment, delays to benefits, low income, illness, debt, homelessness or sudden unexpected bills can all place real pressure on household finances. Even a short-term crisis can quickly become overwhelming without the right help in place. To receive support, individuals will need a referral and foodbank voucher issued by a recognised agency. These partners can also offer wider advice and

guidance to help improve longer-term circumstances. For full details on how to access support, visit the "How to get help" section on the foodbank's website.

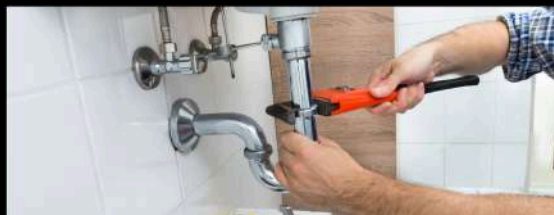
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Back to Nature: Styling your garden with Terracotta and woven planters



As gardens begin to wake up in April, it is often the containers we choose that make the biggest visual difference. While brightly coloured plastics have their place, there is something timeless and grounding about using natural planters such as woven baskets or terracotta pots. They soften a space instantly and help plants feel truly at home.

Terracotta has been used for centuries, dating back to ancient Mediterranean gardens. The warm, earthy tones sit beautifully against fresh green foliage and spring blooms. Whether filled with trailing ivy, cheerful pansies or fragrant herbs, a classic terracotta pot brings texture and authenticity to patios, doorsteps and windowsills. It also has practical benefits. The porous nature of terracotta allows air and mois-

ture to move through the clay, helping to prevent overwatering and encouraging healthy root systems. In our often damp British climate, that natural drainage can be a real advantage.

Woven baskets offer a different but equally appealing look. Perfect for softening hard landscaping such as decking or paving, they introduce a relaxed, cottage garden feel. Lined properly with horticultural plastic or coco fibre, baskets can hold everything from spring bulbs to small shrubs. They are particularly effective for seasonal displays near front doors, where a mix of daffodils, primroses and trailing greenery creates a welcoming entrance.

Natural materials also blend effortlessly with the wider land-

scape. In gardens surrounded by trees, lawns and borders, plastic can sometimes jar with the environment. Terracotta and wicker, by contrast, echo the colours and textures already present outdoors. They weather gracefully too, developing character over time rather than looking tired or faded.

For those looking to refresh their garden this season, swapping out a few synthetic containers for natural alternatives is a simple but impactful change. Group pots in varying sizes for visual interest, mix upright plants with trailing varieties, and allow the materials themselves to become part of the display. Sometimes, it is not just what you plant that matters, but what you plant it in.

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Why Our Homes Matter More Than Ever!

There has been a quiet shift happening behind our front doors.

Our homes are no longer just places we return to at the end of a busy day. They have become offices, sanctuaries, classrooms, gyms, creative studios and places of deep rest. And as life continues to evolve, so too does the way we think about the spaces we live in.

Interior design is no longer simply about what looks good. It is about how a space makes us feel.

Walk into a thoughtfully designed room and you sense it immediately. The light feels softer. The layout flows. Colours soothe rather than shout. There is a balance between practicality and personality. Good design is not about chasing trends; it is about creating environments that support the way we truly

live. In recent years we have seen a growing appreciation for natural textures and materials. Wood, stone, linen and wool bring warmth and grounding energy into a home. Houseplants are no longer accessories but essentials, reconnecting us with nature in an increasingly digital world. Earthy palettes of clay, sage and warm neutrals are replacing stark greys, reflecting a collective desire for comfort and calm.

Yet alongside this softness sits a renewed confidence. Bold feature walls, statement lighting and individually sourced vintage pieces are helping homeowners express identity. Our interiors are becoming more personal, less showroom, more story. Functionality remains at the heart of every successful space. Storage has become design's quiet hero. Hidden cabinetry, multifunctional furniture and

clever zoning allow rooms to adapt as life changes. Open plan living has matured; instead of vast empty expanses, we now see defined areas created through rugs, lighting and subtle level changes. It is about flexibility without losing intimacy.



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Sleep Lighter & Refresh Your Bedroom with a Light Duvet Cover



As winter fades and brighter mornings return, the bedroom deserves a seasonal update just as much as the rest of the home. One of the simplest yet most effective changes you can make is swapping out a heavy winter bedding set for a light duvet cover. It is a small switch that can completely transform both the look and feel of your space. During the colder months, we naturally gravitate towards darker tones, thick fabrics and layered textures. While cosy, these can start to feel heavy and out of place once spring arrives. A lighter duvet cover in breathable cotton or linen instantly lifts the room, creating a fresher and more inviting atmosphere.

Colour plays a key role. Soft neutrals such as warm white, oat-

meal or pale grey create a calm foundation, while gentle pastels like sage green, blush pink or powder blue introduce subtle seasonal colour. Even a delicate floral or fine stripe can bring in a hint of spring without overpowering the room. The goal is to reflect the lighter mood of the season.

Fabric choice matters too. Natural materials such as cotton percale or linen are ideal for this time of year. They are breathable, helping to regulate temperature as nights become milder, and they offer that crisp, hotel-style finish many of us love. Linen in particular brings a relaxed, slightly textured look that works beautifully in both contemporary and traditional homes.

Styling can be simple. Pair your light duvet cover with a couple of coordinating cushions and perhaps a lightweight throw folded at the end of the bed for cooler evenings. Avoid over-layering; spring is about space and airiness rather than bulk.

Beyond aesthetics, changing your bedding can positively impact sleep. A lighter cover helps prevent overheating and encourages a more comfortable night's rest as temperatures fluctuate.

Refreshing your duvet cover may seem like a modest update, but it sets the tone for the entire bedroom. This spring, embrace lighter fabrics and softer shades, and let your sleep space breathe again.



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Crystal Clear Style: Decorating with Glass Accents

As the days grow longer and natural light begins to flood our homes once again, April is the perfect time to embrace clear glass accessories. Simple, elegant and endlessly versatile, pieces such as vases, bowls and hurricane lamps can transform a room without overwhelming it. One of the greatest strengths of clear glass is its ability to reflect and amplify light. Positioned on a windowsill, coffee table or dining setting, glass catches the sunshine and subtly brightens the surrounding space. Unlike heavier materials, it feels airy and uncluttered ideal for spring interiors where the aim is to create freshness and flow after the darker winter months.

Glass vases are perhaps the easiest way to introduce the look. A tall cylindrical vase filled with tulips or blossom branches creates instant impact, while a smaller bud vase with a single

stem offers understated charm. Because the material is transparent, you can see the full structure of the plant, from stem to bloom, which adds a natural, organic quality to your décor. Glass bowls are equally adaptable. On a kitchen island, they can be filled with lemons or limes for a burst of colour. In a hallway, they make an elegant catch-all for keys and essentials. Left empty, a beautifully shaped bowl still acts as a sculptural feature in its own right.

Hurricane lamps bring warmth as well as style. Grouped together at varying heights, they create a relaxed yet polished centrepiece. In the evenings, candle-light flickers through the glass, adding softness and atmosphere perfect for spring dinners or quiet nights in.


Another benefit of clear glass is how effortlessly it blends with


any interior style. Whether your home leans modern, rustic or classic, glass complements rather than competes. It layers beautifully with natural textures such as wood, linen and woven materials.




This season, consider swapping heavier decorative pieces for clear glass alternatives. Sometimes, the simplest additions are the ones that make the biggest difference.


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Skin Cancer Prevention Month: Stay Safe in the Sun This May



May marks Skin Cancer Prevention Month, a timely reminder for all of us to take extra care as we begin spending more time outdoors. With longer days and warmer weather, it's easy to forget just how strong the sun can be even in the UK. Protecting your skin now can significantly reduce your risk of developing serious conditions later in life.

Skin cancer is one of the most common forms of cancer, but the good news is that it is also one of the most preventable. Simple steps can make a big difference. One of the most effective ways to protect yourself is by using a broad spectrum sunscreen with at least SPF 30. Ap-

ply it generously to all exposed skin and reapply every two hours, especially after sweating or swimming.

It's also important to seek shade during peak hours, typically between 11am and 3pm, when the sun's rays are strongest. Wearing protective clothing such as a wide brimmed hat, sunglasses, and lightweight long sleeves can provide an added layer of defence without sacrificing comfort.

Many people assume sunburn only happens on very hot days, but UV rays can penetrate cloud cover, meaning your skin is still at risk even when it feels cooler.

That's why daily protection should become part of your routine throughout spring and summer. Regular skin checks are another key part of prevention. Take time to notice any new moles or changes in existing ones, including differences in size, shape, colour, or texture. If you spot anything unusual, it's important to seek medical advice promptly.

By making small, consistent changes this May, you can enjoy the sunshine safely while protecting your long term health. A little awareness now goes a long way in keeping your skin healthy for years to come.

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Walking

Your way to better health this Spring

Simple routines for all ages!

As spring settles in and the days grow longer, there's no better time to embrace one of the simplest and most effective forms of exercise walking. It's free, accessible to almost everyone, and requires no special equipment, yet the health benefits are remarkable. Whether you're looking to improve fitness, boost your mood, or simply get out of the house more, walking is a fantastic place to start.

Regular walking supports heart health, helps maintain a healthy weight, and improves circulation. It's also incredibly beneficial for

mental wellbeing. A brisk walk in fresh air can reduce stress, ease anxiety, and increase energy levels something many of us need after the slower winter months. Even a short daily walk can help clear your mind and improve focus.

The beauty of walking is that it can be adapted to suit all ages and fitness levels. For beginners or those returning to exercise, start small. A 10 to 15 minute walk around your local area once or twice a day is a great foundation. Focus on consistency rather than speed, and gradually increase your time

as your confidence and stamina grow.

For those looking to step things up, aim for a brisk 30 minute walk five times a week. You should feel slightly out of breath but still able to hold a conversation. Adding variety can also make a big difference try different routes, explore local parks, or include gentle hills to increase intensity. Walking with a friend or joining a local group can also keep you motivated and make it more enjoyable.

Families can easily incorporate

walking into their daily routines too. A walk after dinner, a weekend nature trail, or even walking the school run can all contribute to better health. For older adults, walking is particularly valuable for maintaining mobility, balance, and independence. Gentle, regular movement helps keep joints flexible and muscles strong.

If you're short on time, break your walks into smaller chunks. Three 10 minute walks throughout the day offer similar benefits to one longer session and can be easier to fit into a

busy schedule. You can also make everyday activities more active parking further away, taking the stairs, or walking to local shops instead of driving.

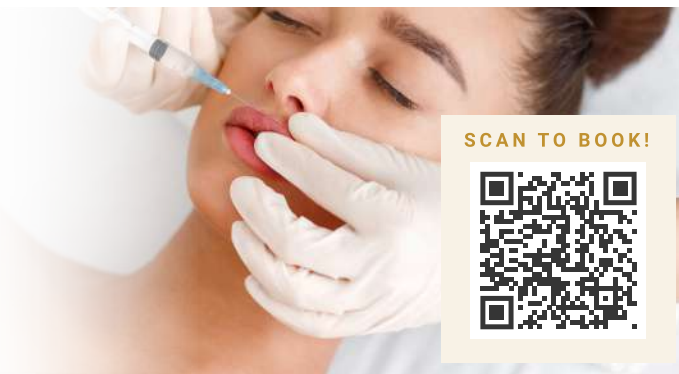
To get the most out of your walks, pay attention to posture. Stand tall, keep your shoulders relaxed, and swing your arms naturally. Comfortable footwear is key, as well as dressing appropriately for the unpredictable British spring weather.

Most importantly, make walking something you enjoy rather than a chore. Listen to music

or a podcast, take in your surroundings, or simply enjoy a moment of calm away from screens and distractions. Spring is a season of renewal, making it the perfect time to build healthier habits that last.

By incorporating regular walking into your routine this May, you'll not only improve your physical health but also enhance your overall sense of wellbeing, one step at a time.





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The Health Benefits of Jersey Royal potatoes

The Jersey Royal potatoes aren't just a seasonal delicacy they're packed with nutritional benefits that make them a smart addition to a balanced diet.

As a new potato, Jersey Royals are harvested early, meaning they retain more nutrients compared to older, stored potatoes. They're naturally low in fat and calories, making them a great choice for lighter spring and summer meals.

One of their standout benefits is their high vitamin C content, which supports the immune system, helps maintain healthy skin, and aids in iron absorption. They're also a good source of

potassium, essential for maintaining healthy blood pressure and proper muscle function.

Thanks to their thin skins which are typically eaten Jersey Royals provide a useful amount of dietary fibre, supporting digestion and helping you feel fuller for longer. Their naturally waxy texture also means they have a lower glycaemic impact than many floury potatoes, helping to keep energy levels more stable.

In addition, they contain small amounts of B vitamins, which play a key role in energy production and overall wellbeing.

To maximise their health benefits,

keep preparation simple boiling or steaming is best. Pairing them with fresh herbs, leafy greens, and lean proteins creates a nutritious, well-rounded meal.

Fresh, flavourful, and full of goodness, Jersey Royal potatoes prove that healthy eating doesn't need to be complicated especially when you start with quality seasonal produce.



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Seasonal Spotlight Jersey Royal potatoes

As spring unfolds, one of the UK's most celebrated seasonal treats makes its eagerly awaited return the Jersey Royal potatoes. Grown exclusively on the island of Jersey, these distinctive new potatoes are prized for their unique flavour, delicate skin, and rich heritage.

What sets Jersey Royals apart is their terroir the combination of Jersey's mild climate, seaweed-enriched soil (known locally as vraic), and traditional farming methods. The potatoes are often grown on steep

coastal slopes, where they soak up plenty of sunshine and benefit from mineral-rich conditions that give them their famously nutty taste.

Harvested from April through to early July, Jersey Royals are at their best when fresh and simply prepared. Unlike larger, maincrop potatoes, there's no need to peel them just a gentle scrub will do. Their thin skins and waxy texture make them ideal for boiling, steaming, or tossing into salads. For a classic dish, boil

Jersey Royals in salted water until tender, then serve with a generous knob of butter, a sprinkle of sea salt, and fresh mint. They also pair beautifully with grilled fish, lamb, or spring greens like asparagus and peas, making them a versatile addition to seasonal menus.

When buying, look for firm potatoes with a light dusting of soil a sign they've been freshly harvested and haven't been overly handled. Store them in a cool, dark place and enjoy them as soon as

possible to make the most of their flavour. Simple, local, and bursting with character, Jersey Royal potatoes are a true taste of British spring a reminder that sometimes the best ingredients need very little fuss at all.

Don't miss our delicious recipe on the next page Jersey Royal, wild garlic & watercress tart with pink pickled onions a perfect seasonal dish showcasing these springtime favourites at their very best.

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Jersey Royal, wild garlic & watercress tart with pink pickled onions



Ingredients

350g Jersey Royal potatoes
1 mint sprig
4 eggs
handful wild garlic leaves
100g watercress
50ml double cream
250g ricotta
1 lemon zested
120g wensleydale or cheddar
pinch nutmeg
1 tbsp rose harissa

For the pastry

200g plain flour
120g cold butter
2 tsp vodka

For the pink pickled onions

1 red onion sliced
125ml rice wine vinegar
25g sugar
½ tsp sea salt
½ tsp yellow mustard seeds

Method

Step 1

First, make the pickled onions. Put the onion in a bowl, then bring the vinegar, sugar, salt, mustard seeds and 50ml water to the boil in a saucepan. Stir over a medium heat to dissolve the sugar. Once dissolved, remove from the heat and pour over the onions. Set aside for at least 30 mins.

Step 2

Meanwhile, make the pastry. Mix the flour with a pinch of sea salt in a bowl. Add the butter and use your fingers to bring it to a breadcrumb texture. Don't worry if there are some chunks, this helps make it light and flaky. Stir in the vodka, then add 2 tbsp ice-cold water and use a butter knife to bring the dough together. Use your hands to form a ball, adding a little more iced water if needed. Turn onto a floured surface and knead briefly until smooth. Flatten into a disc, wrap in baking parch-

ment and chill for 30 mins.

Step 3

Heat the oven to 200C/180C fan/gas 6. Put the potatoes and mint in a saucepan and cover with cold water. Add a pinch of salt and bring to the boil, then simmer for 10 mins until tender. Turn off the heat and leave to cool in the water.

Step 4

Roll the pastry to about 5mm thick, then transfer to a 20cm loose-bottomed tart tin. Trim the edges, then chill for 10 mins. Prick the base with a fork, line with baking parchment and fill with baking beans or rice. Bake for 20 mins.

Step 5

Remove the beans and parchment. Whisk one egg, then brush over the pastry. Bake for 10 mins more, then remove from the oven.

Step 6

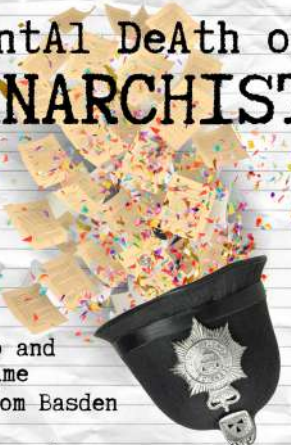
Blitz the remaining eggs and egg wash, wild garlic, watercress and cream to a purée in a food processor. Transfer to a bowl and stir in the drained ricotta and lemon zest. Add most of the cheese, nutmeg and a pinch of salt. Slice the potatoes and arrange half in the tart case. Dot in the harissa, pour over the mixture and add the remaining potatoes. Scatter over the rest of the cheese.

Step 7

Bake for 35-40 mins. Rest for at least 20 mins before removing from the tin and slicing. Serve with a watercress salad and the pickled onions.

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Peaky Blinders: The Real Gangs Behind the Myth Come to Stourbridge

Fans of the hit TV series Peaky Blinders are invited to discover the gripping true story behind the drama as Peaky Blinders. The Real Gangs and Gangsters comes to Katie Fitzgerald's on Thursday 4th June 2026.

Presented by KMS Events, this fascinating illustrated talk is led by acclaimed social historian Professor Carl Chinn MBE. Known for his bestselling book Peaky Blinders: The Real Story and his work as a consultant on the BBC's The Real Peaky Blinders, Professor Chinn brings a wealth of knowledge and passion to this eye-opening exploration of Birmingham's notorious gangs.

While the television series, led by the charismatic Thomas Shelby, portrays a world of sharply

dressed gangsters and organised crime in post-war Britain, the reality was far less glamorous. The real Peaky Blinders of the late Victorian and Edwardian era were typically impoverished young men and teenagers, living in harsh conditions and drawn into a culture of violence and survival.

Rather than calculated crime bosses, these gangs were often involved in street fights, intimidation, and petty crime. They targeted local communities, clashed with police, and were responsible for widespread disorder across Birmingham's working-class districts. Their actions included harassment of vulnerable residents and racially motivated attacks, painting a starkly different picture from the stylised version seen on screen.

Professor Chinn's talk delves into how these gangs emerged, the social conditions that fuelled their rise, and the determined efforts to bring them under control. By 1910, a combination of stronger policing, harsher sentencing, and community initiatives helped bring an end to their influence.


With powerful storytelling, historical insight, and engaging visuals, this event offers a unique chance to separate fact from fiction and uncover the real history behind one of Britain's most famous gang names.

Doors open at 6:30pm, with the talk starting at 7:30pm. This is an 18+ event.

Buy tickets now at: www.wegottickets.com

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Take a Chance on a Night to Remember with ABBA Tribute Swede Dreamz

Get ready for a night of pure pop nostalgia as ABBA tribute sensation Swede Dreamz brings the magic of ABBA to The River Rooms in Stourbridge on Saturday 2nd May 2026.

From the very first notes of “Waterloo” to the unforgettable finale of “Thank You For The Music,” this high-energy stage show promises to transport audiences back to the golden era of disco and pop. Fans can expect to hear all the iconic hits that made ABBA a global phenomenon, including “Dancing Queen,” “Mamma Mia,” “Take A Chance On Me,” “SOS,” “Fernando,” “Chiquitita,” “Gimme! Gimme! Gimme!,” “Knowing Me, Knowing You,” and “Money, Money, Money,” among many more.

Swede Dreamz have built a strong reputation for delivering an authentic and electrifying tribute, combining superb live vocals with tight harmonies that faithfully recreate ABBA's unmistakable sound. Their attention to detail extends to stunning replica costumes, with up to seven outfit changes throughout the performance, capturing the glamour and flamboyance of the original band.

This is far more than just a tribute gig – it's a full stage experience designed to get the crowd involved. Audience participation is encouraged from start to finish, so whether you're singing along, clapping to the beat, or dancing in your seat, you'll be part of the show. It's the perfect

night out for groups of friends, couples, or anyone looking to relive the soundtrack of a generation.

Taking place at The River Rooms, doors open at 7:30pm, with the show starting at 9:30pm. Please note this is an 18+ event.

If you're a lifelong ABBA fan or simply love a feel-good night of timeless music, this is one event you won't want to miss. Grab your dancing shoes and get ready to have the time of your life in Stourbridge this May.

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Afternoon of Laughs as Lucy Beaumont Headlines Fitz of Laughter

Get ready for a fantastic afternoon of comedy as Funny Beeseness brings Fitz of Laughter to Stourbridge, headlined by the brilliant Lucy Beaumont.

Taking place on Saturday 16th May at Katie Fitzgerald's, this matinee show runs from 2:00pm to 3:45pm, offering a perfect early dose of top-quality stand-up in a relaxed and intimate setting.

Lucy Beaumont has become one of the UK's most recognisable and in-demand comedians, thanks to her unique delivery and sharp observational humour. She has appeared on hit shows including Taskmaster, Would

I Lie to You?, Live at the Apollo and Have I Got News for You. She also co-created and starred in the hugely popular Meet the Richardsons, earning a BAFTA nomination for her performance.

Joining Lucy will be two support acts (to be announced), alongside resident MC Wayne Beese, who will keep the energy high and the laughs flowing throughout the show. With its intimate venue, strong line-up and lively atmosphere, Fitz of Laughter is shaping up to be a must-attend event for comedy lovers across Stourbridge and beyond

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May Motoring Fresh Season, Fresh Start For Your Car

May is a fantastic month for getting out on the road. With longer days, improved weather, and a couple of bank holidays on the horizon, it's the perfect time to give your car some well-earned attention and make the most of every journey.

After the challenges of winter driving, your vehicle may benefit from a seasonal check-up. Start with the essentials check tyre pressure and tread depth, top up your screen wash, and make sure oil and coolant levels are correct. Visibility is key too, so ensure your wiper blades are in good condition and your lights are clean and fully functional. Warmer temperatures can also expose issues with your battery or air conditioning, so it's worth testing these now before you rely on them during a longer trip.

As more people take advantage of the improved weather, roads can become noticeably busier, particularly around tourist hotspots, retail parks, and coastal areas. A little forward planning goes a long way set off earlier where possible, allow extra time for delays, and consider quieter alternative routes to avoid congestion. Staying patient and alert behind the wheel will help keep journeys safe and stress-free.

Fuel efficiency is another key focus for many drivers. Small changes in driving habits can make a real difference accelerate smoothly, maintain a steady speed, and avoid carrying unnecessary weight in your vehicle. Keeping tyres properly inflated and ensuring your

car is well maintained will also help maximise fuel economy and reduce wear and tear.

May is also a popular time for those considering a new vehicle. Dealerships often refresh their stock ahead of summer, meaning there can be a wider choice of quality used cars available. Whether you're looking for a practical family car, something more economical for commuting, or even a convertible to enjoy the sunshine, it's worth doing your research and taking a few test drives before making a decision.

Above all, enjoy the experience. Whether it's a countryside escape, a seaside trip, or simply driving home in the evening sun, May is a reminder that time spent on the road can be both practical and pleasurable.

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Stourbridge FC End of Season Focus

It has been a challenging campaign for Stourbridge FC, with the season now drawing to a close and the Glassboys battling hard to secure their status.

After a year of mixed fortunes and determined performances, the focus ultimately shifted to survival. Every point proved vital in a tightly contested lower end of the table, where margins were fine and pressure remained high throughout the run-in.

The War Memorial Athletic Ground once again played its part, with loyal home support providing a constant lift. The fans have stood firmly behind the team all season, and that backing has been crucial during the toughest moments.

While this was not the outcome the club had initially hoped for, there have been clear signs of resilience and character within the squad. Grinding out results when it mattered most could prove decisive in preserving their place.

If survival is secured, it will mark an important achievement given the circumstances and provide a foundation to build on heading into next season.

As the curtain falls, attention will quickly turn to regrouping, rebuilding, and coming back stronger, with supporters hopeful of a more positive campaign ahead.

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