SHOCK AT EXCLUSION OF PUPILS

Report by Richard Guttridge

DUDLEY has the joint highest rate of school pupil exclusions in the country, shocking new figures have revealed.

Nowhere else in the country has an exclusion rate higher than Dudley’s. Eighty children were permanently excluded from schools in the Dudley borough during the 12-month period, equivalent to 0.18 per cent of the school population.

This could only be matched by Tameside in Manchester. The figure is eight times that of Wolverhampton, where only 10 children were permanently excluded during the same period, which is just 0.02 per cent of the school population.

The figures come just weeks after a damning inspection report at a Dudley primary school where the total of excluded pupils is 10 times the national average.

Across the region pupils were barred for assaulting adults and fellow students, threatening behaviour and for use of drugs and alcohol, but the most common reason was for persistent disruptive behaviour.

After Dudley, Walsall saw the next highest amount of exclusions in Black Country at 60 – 0.12 per cent of the school population.

There were 40 exclusions in Sandwell, which was equivalent to 0.08 per cent.

Attacks

In total, 750 pupils were permanently excluded from West Midlands schools.

In Dudley, five pupils physically assaulted adults while there were 17 attacks on peers. Some 32 pupils were excluded for persistent disruption.

Woodside Primary School, in Highgate Road, Dudley, plunged into special measures in June after Ofsted inspectors witnessed pupils using physical violence against classmates – including children being kicked in the head and stomach.

Ian Cooper, cabinet member for children’s services at Dudley Council, said: “We continue to work hard in partnership with all schools to further reduce school days lost to exclusion, both fixed term and permanent. Year on year there has been a decline in fixed term exclusions.”

“Whilst exclusions are sometimes necessary, both for the wellbeing of the student concerned and other students in the school, schools work hard at finding ways of supporting all young people to access learning.”

The council said temporary exclusions at its schools were below the regional average.

Cradley Heath artist Luke Perry with his steel-made Canal Workers Monument which will be displayed on the canal at Hurst Junction.

Art to say thanks

A SCULPTURE honouring the volunteers who have worked for more than 50 years to preserve the canals of the Black Country will be installed next week.

Cradley Heath artist Luke Perry has created a piece celebrating those who have given up their time to care for Dudley’s historic canal network and will be on public display for 25 years.

Perry has been working on the piece at his studio in Cradley Heath for months and said it would be “the best possible way to educate.”

“It is now putting the finishing touches to the artwork which has been commissioned by Dudley Canal Trust. It depicts a scene held in a pair of hands, is cast in steel and will go on display in one of the canal towns under Dudley.”

Written on the head of the sculpture are the words: “This monument is a celebration of the people who have kept this canal alive for over 50 years.”

Bosuns at the canal trust, off Birmingham New Road, said the efforts of volunteers over the years had turned the site into one of the busiest stretches of canal in the country with more than 80,000 visitors per year.

Mr Perry has been working on the piece at his studio in Cradley Heath for months and said it would be transported to the canal trust HQ next week.

It will be transported aboard a vintage truck before being installed at Hurst Junction.

The sculpture will be placed on a plinth with natural light shining on to it from a well opening above.

Motorcyclist killed in bus collision

A MOTORCYCLIST from Quarry Bank died in a crash with a minibus in Wales at the weekend.

Nigel Christopher Thompson, aged 49, has been named as the victim following the accident in mid Wales on Sunday evening.

In a statement, Mr Thompson’s family said they would “sincerely miss him’.

The crash happened at 8.50am on the A449 near Newtown, Powys.

Dyfed-Powys Police spokesman Kate Simmons said: “One was a motorcyclist that was ridden by Mr Thompson and the other vehicle was a minibus with three people on board.

Scene

“Tragically Mr Thompson was pronounced dead at the scene of the collision.

“The three people on board the minibus were not injured but taken to a local hospital as a precaution.”

She added: “The road remained closed throughout the day whilst specialist officers conducted a thorough investigation to establish the cause of the collision.”

The value of Merry Hill Shopping Centre has shot up by almost £11 million, its owners have confirmed.

Intu Properties, which owns half the complex, says the nine per cent rise is due to more valuable rentals.

The Merry Hill shopping complex rose in value from £434.8m at the end of December to £445.6m.

Intu has plans to spend £65m on enhancing the centre, which is also owned by GIC. It spent £48.9m on buying 50 per cent of the centre, which has 214 shops and generates £22.6m annual income.

Chief executive David Fischel said retailers were responding positively to taking space in centres where change and investment are under way.

He added: “We attract over 400 million customer visits a year and aim to provide them with a great experience which encourages them to come more often, stay longer and spend more with our retailers.”

The company owns and operates many of the UK’s biggest and most popular retail destinations.

Meanwhile, Australian supermarket firm Sainsburys has opened at new store at Merry Hill, creating 10 jobs.

Dudley County Council’s cabinet member for children’s services Ian Cooper said: “The three people on board the minibus are a popular retail destination.

“They are responding positively to more often, stay for longer and experience which encourages them to come more often.”

“We are aware of the current situation and are working with the police to try to remove them.”

No job losses are anticipated.

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A DRUG dealer has been jailed for nine years after police caught him in a car with £100,000 worth of heroin.

Elton Hoax, 23, was found guilty of possession with intent to supply the Class A drug and money laundering following a trial at Wolverhampton Crown Court.

Hoax, of Wychbury Road, Stourbridge, was part of a drug dealing ring, the jury had heard.

On January 13, father-of-three Hoax was in a front seat passenger in the Vauxhall Corsa driven by Arber Zyba when it was pulled over by police. Pacific Dudui was in the back seat with 1kg of heroin in two packages next to him. Police officers stopped the car on Park Road, Lye, and arrested the trio.

Judge Martin Walsh said it was clear from mobile phone evidence that the network Hoax was involved with was ‘sophisticated’ and he intended distribution of the heroin.

Hoax denied both charges. Miss Samantha Pevin, defending, said: ‘Mr Hoax was not sitting with the drugs and didn’t touch the drugs.’

She added that there was no drug paraphernalia in his house.

When he was arrested, officers found £14,000 in cash at Hoax’s home.

Judge Walsh said: ‘Class A drugs destroy individuals’ lives and blight communities. All those who cynically involve themselves must expect significant sentences.’

Dudui, 22, of Vircage Road, Lye, pleaded guilty to possession with intent to supply and money laundering. He will be sentenced later this year.

Zyba, 28, of Holly Lane, Erdington, was found not guilty of possession with intent to supply.

COUNCIL house tenants in Dudley owe more than two million pounds in unpaid rent.

Thousands of accounts are in arrears, Dudley Council says, and the total amount owed stands at £206,492.

At the end of June at total of 9,967 accounts were in arrears but the council said these included tenants that paid on a monthly basis by direct debit or standing order.

The amount owed is up on last year’s figure. This time last year the bill was £1,573,647 with 5,425 accounts in arrears.

Bosss said although these accounts are technically in arrears they would not be taking any action unless they missed a payment. Demand letters and text messages are sent to those owing rent. Phone calls and visits are also made by the housing team before legal action is taken.

The council says it will always work to reclaim debt but advice and help was available for those families struggling to pay their bills.

Council leader Pete Lowe said: ‘Where we do not receive payment we will go to court to seek possession. This can result in eviction if no payment arrangement is made.

‘We recognise that our tenants may be experiencing financial difficulty and will always try to support them to make payments sustain their tenancies and clear arrears.’

FRAUD

Sixty council tenants were evicted between April 1, 2014 and December 31, 2014 after rent arrears.

In 2014/15, the council launched more than 460 investigations into 12 months and uncovered 164 cases of housing fraud. The authority also discovered tenants breaking the rules.

People were caught giving the wrong information on housing applications, using false addresses to sub-letting their homes and not using their names to secure council tax rebates.

In June, it emerged the council owed £2.5 million in unpaid council tax from last year. Thousands of council tax accounts were not paid in full by the end of the 2014/15 financial year. But bosses say the authority has an excellent track record for clawing back money owed.

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Ring and Ride bus use is declining

More than 450 thefts reported at care homes

More than 450 thefts were reported at care homes and nursing homes in the West Midlands during the last three years, new figures reveal.

Jewellery, cash and medication were among items stolen from residents, with the value of lost property totalling tens of thousands of pounds.

Despite the hundreds of incidents reported, investigations resulted in only 32 people being charged. Two were care home workers.

In total, 465 thefts were reported at care homes and nursing homes between January 2012 and June 2015.

Theft's most popular item of choice were mobile phones but laptops, a credit card, a passport and a bank card were also taken. The most expensive item stolen was a piece of jewellery worth £4,000.

But figures released by West Midlands Police showed that thefts from care and nursing homes had fallen.

Surprising

Dudley’s Councillor Steve Waltho said the figures were surprising but added: “There are hundreds of care homes and hospitals across the Midlands and we don’t know how these figures compare with the rest of the country. My mother is in a care home and I know how valuable they try to be. It’s also important to remember caregivers themselves are also victims."

Councillor Waltho said CCTV at care homes could help prevent thefts but it was also important residents were given privacy.

Motorcyclist is injured in collision

A MOTORCYCLIST and a taxi collided, blocking a road in Rowley yesterday morning (Wednesday).

It happened shortly before 7am on Dudley Road, near the Clee Hill link with Shemstone Island.

The motorcyclist, a man aged in his 30s, suffered head, leg and wrist injuries in the accident.

He was taken to Birmingham’s Queen Elizabeth Hospital for further assessment and treatment.

Around a 500ft section of Dudley Road was closed in both directions after the crash close to Mucklow Hill.

Railways were damaged in the accident, near a pedestrian crossing outside Shemstone House offices, which are a base for Halesowen College.

Firm support for table tennis

A BURSDEN company came to the rescue of sporty Age UK seniors by making them their own table tennis. AND Metal Services, Pearswood Lane, fixed the broken metal table after it broke at Springfield Activity Centre.

Wanted Tombola & Raffle Prizes! All Donations Gratefully Received!

Chairs were a favorite item, with residents making the most of the increased space. The Red Lemon Electric Blues Band performed at the End of Term Ball, and was joined by the像Chuck Berry和Chuck Berry such legends as Chuck Berry, as the Red Lemon Electric Blues Band

Voluntary worker loses cancer battle

A POPULAR voluntary worker has lost her battle against cancer. Valerie Clarke, 76, of Jenkins Avenue, Kinver, died on July 14.

Mrs Clarke was a former voluntary youth club leader at Gresley’s Lane Methodist Church in Cradley Heath. She became a Cub Scout leader and president of Kinver Evening Women’s Institute, and was also a volunteer for the Mary Stevens Hospice charity shop and the National Trust’s Kinver Rock House. She leaves husband Bob, two children and four grandchildren.

Her funeral was at Kinver last week.

In the end, the service is aimed at people who cannot easily use conventional public transport.

CENTRE MEETINGS

ANew group of volunteers is meeting regularly at the hospital and is trying to improve them. The group meets at the hospital on the first Tuesday of each month.

OLDER people are being given priority and offered to ≥24 or ≥28 years of the day.

They are expected to last for four days.

Road delay warning

MOTORISTS have been warned to approach the bridge Town Hall is available at www.wolvencivic.co.uk or on 0870 320 7000.

Get information on foster caring

PEOPLE interested in becoming foster parents are invited to a meeting at the former Kinver Town Hall.

It involves leaping from a cliff or other high point surface and someone might be killed.

“Children’s centre revamped in 24 hours

A CHILDREN’S centre was transformed by a day staff by a home owner.

The Four Dwellings Children’s Centre in Quinton was refurbished in just 24 hours by 50 Dunelm staff.

“People interested in being foster parents can come along to find out more,” said Steve Way, from the centre.

“Road delay warning

MOTORISTS have been warned to expect delays on Hagley Road, near its junction with Stirchley, due to gas pipe work.

National Grid will be carrying out works on Hagley Road, near its junction with Stirchley, due to gas pipe work.

“People living in the area should contact police on 101.”

Old soldier fought off burglar in his home

THE granddaughter of a war veteran who fought off a burglar with his walking stick has spoken of her pride in her 88-year-old tough guy.

Tom Bull sent the raider packing after he forced his way into his Kingswinford bungalow. His granddaughter Deborah Smith said he wouldn’t hesitate to do it again.

The great-grandfather came across the burglar in his hallway after he was waken by a noise. The pair struggled and Mr Bull suffered cuts to his arms but reached for his walking stick and hit the intruder over the head with it. The raiders fled empty-handed.

Mr Bull, who served with the Welsh Guards during the Second World War, said: “I was a little bit shaken up but I’m alright.”

The brave pensioner has anaemia and has to use oxygen.

MS South, a pharmacist, said: “He is a tough guy. He may be 88 but he is no shrinking violet. We need to prevent this happening to another person, perhaps a small old lady."

Anyone with information should contact police on 101.

Quarry pool youngsters are going with death

CHILDREN are dicing with death by breaking into a Rowley Regis quarry and ‘tombstoning’ into the water.}

In 2013, 15-year-old Augusto Zanaria died after slipping from an edge and plunging into a pool at a disused quarry near to the Crooked House pub in Halesowen. Family and friends launched a campaign after the death, calling for the disused quarry to be closed and secured.

The scheme could take up to 30 years to complete but it is hoped the homes could be completed during the next decade.

It is hoped the quarry hole that is the quarry will eventually become open green space to be enjoyed by the local community.

Ms Earley added FCO Environment would seek prosecutions against those illegally accessing the quarry. She added: “It is also important that people are aware of trespassing onto private land is against the law.”

Councillors backed the plan to regenerate the site earlier this year.

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Spaces Available for Stalls £10 per pitch Contact Vicky@ywetreenursinghome.co.uk for more details or ring 01562 710609 Option 2. Donations can also be made at www.justgiving.com/ywetree. Additional Raffle with all proceeds going to the Residents Funds.
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THE BEST OF PETER RHODES

WHAT is it with all these beards? The fashion for facial hair is infusing the upper lips and chins of young
men everywhere. Are beards the new tattoos? There is a theory that beards become fashionable at times when
men feel threatened by women or by change in general. They were almost compulsory in Victorian England when
there was a woman on the throne and the rise of busi-
ness corporations made individuals feel less important.
Perhaps the rise of feminism accounts for today's crop
of beards. Unless, of course, beards are part of that
generation which has gone to university but learned very
little and is now eager to appear intellectual. A beard
could suggest brainpower where there is actually none. As
the critic A. A. Gill put it perfectly: “I’ve never been convinced
that facial hair is an alternative to thought.”

Black cab drivers in Birmingham are threaten-
ing to boycott New Street Station after

‘that told they will have to pay extra fees of up to

£1,000 per year to pick up passengers.

There were fears that thousands of commuters
could be left stranded.

The taxi drivers union, RMT, is meeting with Network
Rail bosses over the changes, which the union say could
be justified by Jack Avery

“This will have serious consequences and create se-
vere disruption around the construction site

for the last five years.

railways are shut."

United

RMT general secretary Mick Cash, said: “None of

our taxi driver members will accept Network Rail’s

terms. They are all unionised and determined that no-one

will pay this extortionate tax.”

“Instead, drivers will be forced to pay for hire near the

station, meaning that Network Rail’s actions will simply inconvenience pas-

sengers by making them walk further to pick up a taxi.

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Old soldiers dying before getting promised medal

City will deal with emergency heart care

HEART attack victims in Sandwell will no longer be treated at the General Hospital in West Bromwich, but five miles away at City Hospital, Birmingham.

All emergency coronary care is being centralised at City as bosses say the current system is "unsatisfactory." But the move will mean longer ambulance journeys for people in Sandwell.

Two cardiac units will be set up at City Hospital at the Dudley Road site to accommodate the rise in patients. Outpatient appointments will still take place at Sandwell General Hospital and Rowley Regis Community Hospital.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust said it was confident the move would improve care.

Medical director Roger Stedman said: "The location of interventional cardiac care on one site will provide full emergency 24-hour cover, 365 days per year with improved access times from when patients arrive for emergency treatment until the time they receive the necessary procedure."

"The public are advised to dial 999 for help if they experience severe chest pain. West Midlands Ambulance Service will bring all patients suspected of needing urgent cardiac treatment straight to City Hospital."

MORE than a dozen D-Day veterans from across the Black Country and Staffordshire, who were promised France’s highest military award for bravery, have died without receiving the medal.

Last year, the French Government announced it would give the Legion d’Honneur to all surviving veterans of the Normandy landings and campaigning to liberate France in 1944. It is not awarded posthumously.

Campaigner Joy Widowsen said 11 veterans from Wolverhampton and Staffordshire had died since French President Francois Hollande announced the medals would be awarded on June 6 last year.

Funerals

She said: "I’ve been to 11 funerals since then. This has taken far too long. The French Government made a promise, but a lot of veterans are questioning whether they will be around to receive the award. It is causing a great deal of distress. This needs to be sorted out as a matter of urgency."

Another campaigner, Hibby Brown, holds a database of veterans from the Black Country who are eligible to receive the medal.

"If I ring one of them and they don’t answer the phone I always fear the worst," said Mrs Brown, of Kingswinford. "Some of these men won’t live to receive the award."

West Bromwich West MP Adrian Bailey says he has written to the Ministry of Defence requesting they urge the French Government to act quickly.

The distribution of the medals has been bungled by red tape. The French Embassy in London says the applications are now being prioritised on age and health grounds.

Apprentice ambassador for Dudley Lewis Sinclair with town ambassador Nikki Cheung

AN APPRENTICE ambassador for Dudley, Lewis Sinclair, has taken up the role. The 20-year-old will work alongside ambassador Nikki Cheung to promote the town.

It comes as work nears completion on the multi-million pound revamp of Dudley Market. Work has also begun on a £11.5m revamp of Coronation Gardens to include an amphitheatre, water in the fountain for the first time in decades, new seating, paths and lighting.

Councillor Khurshid Hussain, cabinet member for planning and economic development, said: "The ambassador scheme continues to grow from strength to strength, as we look for new opportunities to celebrate everything that is happening in Dudley.

"I would like to extend a warm welcome to Lewis, and urge parents to pass the message on to the young people of our towns to apply for this great opportunity."

He said: "Lewis has been appointed as part of the £6.7 million transformation of the town centre."

Former Halesowen College student Lewis Sinclair has taken up the role. The 20-year-old will work alongside ambassador Nikki Cheung to promote the town.

AN APPRENTICE ambassador for Dudley, Lewis Sinclair, has taken up the role. The 20-year-old will work alongside ambassador Nikki Cheung to promote the town.

AMBASSADOR to begin new role for town

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Running the zoo is a family affair for boss

IN MY VIEW
with Mark Andrews

Meet the boss — Dudley Zoo’s Derek Grove, of Stourbridge

Dudley Zoological Gardens are practically a family business for the attraction’s new director, CLARE BUTLER reports

He has taken over the running of one of the Black Country’s most popular attractions at a crucial point in its history.

And Dudley Zoo’s new director Derek Grove says he wants to keep up the rapid pace of change at the site, which has seen visitor numbers rocket in recent years.

The zoo is undergoing a huge transformation with new buildings, a joint entrance with the neighbouring Black Country Living Museum and a new visitor centre.

Mr Grove took over from former chief executive Peter Suddock, who stepped down from the role ‘by mutual agreement’ in April, following suspension amid an investigation into his conduct.

Mr Grove, aged 52, said: “Over the coming years it is important that the zoo continues to change at a similar pace like it has done.”

Conservation

He wants to bring in more exhibits and expand the range of animals – while also focusing on conservation.

Mr Grove originally started at the zoo in 1980 as a keeper, working his way through the ranks to head curator in his last role.

He said: “I always wanted to improve the zoo and the level of animal care.

‘Animal care is always at the forefront of our decisions and we are working towards improving what we can do for them.’

“It’s about making it a more interesting visitor experience and bringing in more exhibits too.”

After a steep decline in visitor numbers during the 1980s and 90s, numbers have steadily risen on the up growing at five per cent per year over the last ten years.

Mr Grove intends his past experience and passion for the animals will also allow him to

Surprise — The Grove family are joined by a photo-bombing lemur at Dudley Zoo

create a powerful force for wildlife conservation.

He said: “Pushing into more conservation is all within our zoo ethos, we want to develop every possible aspect. One of my favourite times spent here over the years has been working alongside the elephants – which I did for 18 years.”

I went over to France with them in 2003 to an elephant safari park and that was one of the last times I then worked with the animals before becoming curator.

“I stayed with them for a few weeks to help them acclimatise and to introduce them to their new keepers.

“Being in a senior position has allowed me to be able to bring about change and most importantly change for the animals.”

But his new position as director will also continue to add to the Grove family links at the zoo – his wife, two children and father have also worked there over the past 35 years, making it a real family affair.

Mr Grove said: “I started as a trainee keeper in 1988. Before that I was a heating engineer. I actually came here to do a heating job in the hippo house and I stood and watched some keepers breaking ice on the pond.

“I thought I would like to do that! but it probably was a bit of a shock when on an ice cold morning you find yourself really doing it – maybe it wasn’t as fun as it looked then. “I’ve always loved my job and the animals and I have been lucky to be able to play a vital part in their wellbeing over the years.

“Growing up with their father at the zoo, Mr Grove’s two children, Cerys and Sam, were more than likely to follow in his footsteps. Cerys, now 25, started working in a seasonal job at the zoo in 2000 after leaving school.

Not before long she was signed up as a student zoo keeper but has since left to pursue other ventures including owning her own pub in Swindon.

However, Sam, aged 22, has continued to work at the zoo, recently being promoted to senior keeper. He said he could even see his own children working at the zoo in the future.

He said: “When I was at school everyone loved the fact dad worked at the zoo. It was something different.

“I started working here in 2009. I left college as I felt it wasn’t really for me as they encourage you to go down a normal route of getting a trade.

“it work with the primates, apes and reptiles, but I’ve got to say my favourite animal would be the baby orangutan Sprout.”

And according to the Campaign for Better Boarding Hound, it ranks to head curator in his last role. Mr Grove, 79, only started work at the zoo after finishing his previous job at 61.

“He said: “My wife said I didn’t need a job but I was looking for something to do again and the role as a train driver for one day a week came up at the zoo.

“After working on the train, I was employed to work at the zoo, I had some varied roles. I was a bit of a handyman. I would knock it down to a couple of times a week and eventually knocked it down to a couple of times a month, but I was still at the zoo for years of ages.

“The Groves, who are from Stourbridge, say they are still at the zoo because they still remain a close knit family, meeting up on weekends as Dudley Zoological Gardens, on Castle Hill, opened in 1937 and covers an area of approximately 40 acres, and is home to more than 1,300 animals. It is open from 11am with last admission at 4pm and features a range of activities through the summer season.

Meet the boss — Dudley Zoo’s Derek Grove, of Stourbridge

Cerys, Sam, Derek and Lynne Grove all worked at the zoo

At the controls — David Grove driving the zoo train in 2000

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At the controls — David Grove driving the zoo train in 2000

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Nothing to show for 40 years of graft

HAVING worked in this country for well over 40 years, in continuous employment, a skilled worker, I would like to thank David Cameron and the Conservative Party for putting me out of work.

They decided in their infinite wisdom to cut funding to the council, thus putting me out of a job. Now at the age of 54 and applying for thousands of jobs over three years, after ‘doing the right thing’, I am now living with my wife on virtually fresh air. We eat the right thing, I am now living with age of 54 and applying for thousands of jobs, putting me out of a job. Now at the age of 54 and applying for thousands of jobs, putting me out of a job.

I even pay council tax out of my £500 off the state. Last winter we nearly died of hypothermia due to not having money to keep warm. I have even applied for ‘warming up’ and toilet cleaning jobs. But unfortunately I was informed I did not have enough experience in this field.

So from once being an assistant furniture manager at Woolworths and having a trade, which makes no difference now, and as my age is a barrier, I would have to ask our MP’s where are the jobs for everyone?

While Dave is sipping Champagne and feasting on platters, I would like to ask him to come and live like us for a month. Preferably in the winter, so he can help scrape the ice off the windows of our un-insulated home.

I have worked all my life, have good references and all I want to do is put food on the table.

If I pass away this winter from hypothermia I have instructed my family to inscribe on my gravestone. Passed away due to Conservative cuts and I am an ex-Conservative voter.

Identity lost in the name of progress

FOLLOWING the recent calls to celebrate Staffordshire Day next year, I wish I was born in Bilston in the county of Worcestershire.

The Black Country was the home to cut funding to the council, thus Conservative Party for putting me out.

The majority of them have now worn away, so can the authorities claim to have them re-done?

Several years ago, red coloured patches started to be laid down on the surface of roads. The idea was that they were creating anti-skid surfaces.

These road surfaces were treated to make them safe but a lot of those now are not only hazards, where the ‘stuff’ has lifted off, but the road surface is unstable.

Do they too have the same rights?

We seem to be using the economics of ‘Cloud Cuckoo Land’

“I feel that one of the worst engineering projects in Britain was the building of the Channel Tunnel. I think this country was far better when we were an island and people would have had to swing to get here. I would like to ask George Osborne what sense does it make to make so many people redundant, when they will draw unemployment pay instead of paying tax?”

This includes police, firefighters, who are necessary, when we see these mainly redundant politicians can claim £150 to £300 per day just for going to the House of Lords. Are they necessary?

Why are we sending £250 billion to India over the next four years, apart from the millions we have already sent, and the millions of pounds to send aid to Nepal after their earthquake.

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Jordans Solicitors provide legal services including Wills and Probate, Property and Family Law from our offices in Halesowen and Blackheath. We cover Birmingham and the Black Country, including Sandwell, Dudley, Walsall, West Bromwich and Stourbridge. Jordans was established in Blackheath by John Jordan in 1990. Over the last 5 years we have trebled in size resulting in opening a second branch in Halesowen and we have three distinct departments, each headed by a specialist in that area.

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Meet the Team

Michael Jordan LLB
Michael has been with the firm since 2006 when he joined as a trainee. He is now Managing Director specialising in Residential and Commercial Property.

Baldeep Kooner LLB
Baldeep is a Wills and Probate Specialist advising on Wills, Probate, Powers of Attorney, Tax Planning and Court of Protection cases.

Brinder Khara LLB
Brinder is an Accredited Family Solicitor and has been practising in the area of Family Law since 1996. She is also a Notary Public.

Recent additions to the team include Rikki Bateman and Emma Hingley. Rikki is a Qualified Solicitor specialising in Residential Property. He is vastly experienced in all aspects of buying and selling, including New Builds and Help to Buy Schemes. Emma has joined us from a local Estate Agents. She brings a wealth of experience, which will further improve the process of Buying or Selling a property for our clients and make it a smoother and less stressful process.

Here at Jordans Solicitors you will find experienced specialists in the following aspects of law, conveyancing both residential and commercial, Wills and Probate, Powers of Attorney & Family Law

If the regular office hours 9.00am to 5.00pm Monday to Friday are not very convenient for you we can offer Thursday evening and Saturday morning.
Golf course vandalism prompts gate closure

THE gates of Warley Woods will be locked at night following a spate of vandalism on the golf course.

Holes have been dug and tyre marks left across the greens during a series of attacks at the popular beauty spot.

As a result, the pedestrian gates opposite Lenwade Road and Grove Road will be locked between the hours of 6pm and 9am. The restrictions will start on Saturday.

Bosses say the damage has left them out of pocket because of repeatedly having to clear up after the vandals and fear it will put golfers off visiting the course.

Warley Woods Community Trust manager Vic Cole said there had been a spate of problems during recent months, prompting the group to take action. The decision to lock the gates will be reviewed on a monthly basis.

Prepared

“It is a range of things from holes being dug in the greens and bunkers, tyre marks on greens and bunkers full of feet and paw marks within a few hours of them having been prepared for play,” she said.

“We rely on the golf income to help run the whole site and we are trying to make it a place people want to come back to.

The 100-acre nature reserve has previously been plagued by mini-motor riders.

It came after officers from the Abbey neighbourhood team began closing the side gates off Abbey Road on some nights to prevent cars accessing the site after dark.

Sandwell councillor Bob Piper, who represents the Abbey ward, said he could see why the trust had decided to close the gates at night but said some park users would be affected.

He said: “Why people would want to go into the park after dark I do not know, but the trust did receive feedback from people saying they used it in the early hours to walk their dogs and this move will inconvenience them.”

Sandwell Academy pupils take a selfie with Sir Geoff Hurst POOTIE-MAD youngsters from a Black Country school met up with England legend Sir Geoff Hurst to promote a new project.

Last Thursday, July 30, marked 48 years to the day since Hurst notched a hat-trick for England in the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany.

To mark the 50th anniversary next year, a new project – 50Winners – has been launched. The pupils from Sandwell Academy, in Handsworth Lane, travelled to Cheltenham Town FC to film a video with Sir Geoff to celebrate the anniversary of the historic win.

They even grabbed a cheeky selfie with the hat-trick hero.

50Winners promises to offer a wide range of events, competitions and awards celebrating the past, present and future of English football in the next year.

Pupils meet cup hero

Sandwell Academy pupils take a selfie with Sir Geoff Hurst...
**Restaurant could bring 80 jobs if proposals approved**

THE developer behind plans for a restaurant, creating 80 jobs, at Oldbury’s Birchley Island says work could begin next year if plans are approved.

St Modwen has unveiled multi-million pound proposals for a restaurant operated by national chain Greene King.

The site, between the island and the slip road for Junction 2 of the M5, has previously been earmarked for a hotel and casino but both schemes never got off the ground. The restaurant would be part of Greene King’s Farmhouse Inn brand and create 80 full-time and part-time jobs.

If planning permission is granted by Sandwell Council, construction will get under way in 2016.

Ian Romaino, senior development surveyor at St Modwen, said: “A new restaurant will be a great addition to the current offer at Birchley Island and will cater for motorists, shoppers and workers in the area.

Richard Lawin, managing director for Farmhouse Inns, said: “We are excited to be bringing forward plans for a family-friendly Farmhouse Inn on Birchley Island.

“Usually popular with business users and families, Farmhouse Inns are good value restaurants known for daily curries, home-made cakes, soaked ales and children’s activity play areas.

“As well as creating new local jobs, the restaurant would provide customers with a greater choice of where to dine, so we hope that these plans will be warmly welcomed by the community.

“The scheme also includes a car park with 85 spaces. The 1,181 sq ft restaurant will have two entrances to the car park and those visiting to dine and those using only the bar. The building will have a central patio for outdoor dining, which will be enclosed by a landscaped area with high shrubs, separating it from the car park.

TV presenter Joanne Malin and her four-legged pooch Maisy helped to unveil a new £1.8 million PDSA Pet Hospital in Oldbury.

The veterinary centre on St Matthew’s Road has replaced the charity’s old site on Hagley Road West, Quinton.

The plush hospital has a critical care ward, operating theatre and the latest diagnostic and surgical equipment.

PDSA’s chairman, John Smith, said the facilities will equip vets with all they need to treat animals in need.

He said: “It is wonderful to be able to open practices that offer the latest equipment to enable us to provide the best possible care for lots of animals.

“Each practice we build we try to make better. This one has got a lot of features in that will make it easier for vets and safer for the animals.

“We are extremely thankful to our supporters as this would not have happened without them and their fundraising.

“All donations – big or small have been appreciated.”

The building and equipment have been funded entirely by PDSA supporters and donations from the public.

It has been called The Marian and Christina Jones Centre of Surgical Excellence following generous donations to the building costs and operating theatre. The premises will also be used for training.

Mr Smith added: “We are fortunate to have excellent training facilities here too for vets of the future. Trainees will be able to look from behind glass partitions in the theatre.”

**£1.8m animal hospital is opened**
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EXHILARATING to hear Neil Young so focussed and furious on **The Monsanto Years**.

ALBUMS
by Leon Burakowski

**Veteran rocker not**
**going to fade away**

**VETERAN** rocker Neil Young is opting to burn rather than fade away and is full of righteous rage and indignation on his 36th album **The Monsanto Years**.

Global corporations, particularly the one in the title, come in for fierce condemnation over their impact on farmers and the planet in a series of songs tied by his ecological concerns.

In LA band Promise of the Real, led by Willie Nelson’s sons Lukas and Micah, he has got a backing band with the heft to make a blisteringaring riffs and cymbophony to match his ire, on a par with his mighty backing band of yesteryear Crazy Horse.

Some songs suffer because the message has come before the music, with lyrics squeezed in to make his point and slip into slogans — “Too big to fail, too rich for jail” — on Big Box. But it is exhilarating to hear Young sounding so focussed and furious.

**Classic**

The stomping **Workin’ Man** is a highlight, as is **People Want to Hear About Love**, on which he states his case for peace. **Harvest Moon** adds another lunar themed soothing ballad in the style of his classic **Harvest Moon**.

The album is available with a 75-minute 2CD containing in-studio performances and behind the scenes footage from the making of the album.

**Tame Impala**, **AKA Aussie psych pop sensation** Kevin Parker, largely switches guitars for synths on his third album **Currents**.

The songs still have Tame Impala hallmarks, such as wistful melancholy, sudden changes of gear and phasing, but Parker brings in elements of fried funk, a few expletives and synth pop akin to classic **OMD** or, more contemporary, **Daft Punk**. Parker’s vocals are to the fore, often delivered as a sweet falsetto but Currents has bitter elements bitting a break-up album. He also displays a more assured commercial touch, with Cause I’m A Man being one of the best pop tracks of the year, the best record Justin Timberlake should have made.

A treasure trove for those interested in the beginnings of UK folk-rock, the grapeful label’s three CD set Dust On The Nettles (63 tracks clocking in at just under four hours) is, as it’s subtitle says, A Journey through the British Underground Folk Scene 1967-72. These were exciting times when the hippy scene overlapped with the folk clubs and festivals. Maybe potent substances were sampled as the finger-in-the-ear folk scene took on psychodelic and world music influences, as the longer-songwriting scene was blooming.

There are some familiar names here including **Fairport Convention**, **Jean Armastadning**, **The Pentagon**, recently rediscovered **Wahiti Buryan** and **Marc Bolan**’s **Tyranosaurus Rex** in pre- glam rock days. But the joy comes in discovering some choice rarities, several never released before.

Serious seekers for obscure rock ‘n’ roll and Francophone music fans will find lots of Greek delights on Various Artists album **Vive Le Rock ‘n’ Roll The Uncrushed World of French Rock ‘n’ Roll 1958 to 1962**. Put together by RPR International, a label dedicated to seeking out rare and iconic non-Anglo music, this 22-track set has lots of treats.

Highlights include **Twist A Saint Tropez** and Le Jour J by Les Chats Sauvages, Baby Let’s Play House and Sweet Little Sixteen by adopted English-American Vince Taylor and his Play Boys, garage rocker **Oh Les Filles** by Les Pingouins, the bonkers Gong-Gong by Danyel Gerard, and the accorion-propelled Rock Rock by Charles Verstaete. The 1956 **Track Rock and Roll Mops** by Henry Cordina and his Original Rock and Roll Boys, co-written by Michel Legrand, lays claim to being France’s first rock record. A minus point is that the greatest of all French rockers, Johnny Halliday, is represented by two poor quality recordings.

**ALBUMS**
by Leon Burakowski

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Council land bid is part of homes plan

THE site of an old hospital in Wordsley will be redeveloped with more than 100 homes.

Empty Ridge Hill Hospital, where several buildings have already been demolished, is set to be turned into a housing development some eight years after homes were first suggested.

Councillors in Wordsley have welcomed the proposal but say they have concerns about an increase in traffic.

Plans for homes to be built at the hospital site were first made back in 2007 but did not come to fruition. Now NHS Property Services is seeking to buy council land by the access road leading from Brierley Hill Road up to the former hospital site.

New footpaths would be created to provide safer crossings with new pedestrian and cycle routes to Auckley Road.

Officials are due to submit a revised planning application for up to 120 homes and NHS Property Services want to enter into an agreement to be able to buy the empty land once they have secured planning permission for the Ridge Hill transformation.

Major of Dudley Councillor Steve Waltho at threatened community centre St Thomas’s Network
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A POPPY-INSPIRED collection of artwork has gone on display at The Ruskin Glass Centre to mark Amblecote’s first In Bloom competition entry.

Artists from the Wollaston Road glass centre produced pieces relating to the competition’s poppy theme, ranging from textile to enamel designs. Amblecote in Bloom was the idea of councillors Christine Jerks and Carole Griffin, chairman of the Ruskin Craft Association who designed an enamel piece for the exhibition, said: “Our ideas came from Christine’s initiative with this being the first Amblecote In Bloom competition entry. The symbol and theme of the competition is a poppy, so our artists at the glass centre each decided to do a piece.”

“Therewere 10 glass pieces but we also had wood, enamel, soap and textile designs as well as silver and resin jewellery and artwork cards. “They were all put in a display cabinet and looked really impressive. “We had three pieces given to us by artists from the Broadfield House Glass Museum in Kingswinford too.”

Creative woodwork artist Jamie Hubbard carved a poppy out of wood, while the Natural Soapworks produced a poppy in soap and glass artist Vic Bampton designed a chunky glass globe entitled ‘field of poppies’.

Mr Bampton combines his painting and glass-blowing skills to create vibrantly colourful, humorous, one-off glass art pieces which are exhibited and collected internationally. His work is also held in international public collections including Corning Museum of Glass in New York.

Following a £1.4 million refurbishment, The Ruskin Glass Centre is home to a wide array of glass crafts and complementary trade. The display is at the museum until August 22.
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Cannock Wood Colliery closes down in 1973

An Express & Star promotional film dating back to 1961

An E&S reader stops to take in the news in 1961

Archive footage showing West Bromwich Albion in action

A young Bobby Robson interviewed on camera

The final Civic Sunday parade in Bilston in 1965

View looking up Victoria Street, Wolverhampton in the 1930s


PHONE FOR BROCHURE

ACollection of historic films released online offers a fascinating insight into the Black Country's heritage.

The project reveals hidden histories and forgotten stories of people and places from the region.

Britain on Film has been launched by the British Film Institute and aims to share films from the past to a new contemporary audience.

The vintage videos were all held in a regional collection - but have been released to share them with a wider audience.

Some of the highlights from the Black Country films include a 1961 promotional film about the Express & Star and a 1963 portrait of West Bromwich Albion, with Bobby Robson being interviewed.

There is also a video from Wolverhampton in 1970s which documents the upheaval in the city as Georgian and Victorian shops made way for flats. The Media Archive for Central England (MACE) has supported the BFI and Britain on Film in the project.

Phil Leach, senior curator at MACE, said: “It's great to be able to preserve those old videos but we also need to be getting things out there for the public to see.

“If you put something online people can watch it again and again, any time. This is a really good way of getting films out there.”

Mr Leach said one of his highlights from the Black Country was an 80-year-old film of King George V's Silver Jubilee, which saw a pageant put on at Molineux. There is also a 1904 film showing Wolves playing away at Preston.

The online BFI Player gives everybody in the UK free access to thousands of film and TV titles.

By 2017 10,000 film and TV titles from 1895 to the present day will be digitised.

Newsreels, advertisements, home movies, forgotten TV shows, and films by government departments all offer surprising insights into British life in the 20th century. BFI head curator Robin Baker said: “For 120 years cameras have captured almost every aspect of life in the UK on film, but too often these have been inaccessible to all but the most determined researchers.

“Britain on Film is transforming access to films from the UK's archives and making them available, no matter where you live.”

Heather Stewart, BFI creative director, said: “It’s vital the UK’s film and TV archives – Britain’s national collection – can be enjoyed by everyone.

“We have now created a way for the British public to discover and engage with their heritage like never before.”

MEMORY LANE

By David Cosgrove

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Teenage Bottlecocket

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Thursday, 7pm
Slade Rooms, W'ton
Teenage Bottlecocket are a punk rock band formed in Wyoming in the United States in 2001. The band was formed by twin brothers Ray and Brandon C,"n. Visit www.wolfofsivc.co.uk

Saturday, 7pm
Various events
Project Soundlounge is the only youth led music festival this year in Birmingham. Venues across the city centre are involved. It's live, it's fresh, it's a bassy, it's free.
Visit www.thsh.co.uk

Thursday - Aug 14
Wightwick Manor, W'ton
On Thursday and Friday, August 14 join the Prince of Denmark as he battles his inner demons and seeks to avenge his late father - all with a Folksy twist!
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Fri at 10am - 4pm, Sat at 10am - 5pm, Sun at 10am - 5pm,
10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm, Thu at 10am - 5pm,
£3 - £17
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 3024.
Call 0121 303 1966

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Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 89 3D.
Call 0121 303 1966

Group Occupation III & Group Occupation North-West
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10am - 5pm, Wed at 10am - 5pm, Thu at 10am - 5pm,
£12.50
The New Art Gallery Walsall, WS8 7BG.
Call 01922 654400

Animal Architecture
Fri at 10am - 11am, Sat at 10am - 5pm, £5
The New Art Gallery Walsall, WS8 7BG.
Call 01922 654400

FAMILY EVENTS

Birds Of Prey Display
Sun at 2pm - 4pm, Haden Hill House Museum, Cradley Heath, B64 7JU.
Call 01384 569444

Kite Flying: Workshop
Fri at 11am - 2pm, £2
Kinver Edge and the Rock Houses, DY7 6DL.
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Pog Plane Magnets: Workshop
Mon at 11.30am - 3.30pm, Tue at 11.30am - 3.30pm,
10am - 3.30pm, £2
Royal Air Force Museum, Cosford, TF11 8QO.
Call 01922 376200

Digital Music Making: Workshop (Ages 6-11)
Tue at 10am - 3pm, £10.50
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 33 3H.
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ART GALLERIES

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Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 33 3H.
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Artist Development West Midlands
Fri at 10am - 5pm, Sat at 10am - 5pm, Sun at 10am - 5pm,
Mon at 10am - 5pm, Tue at 10am - 5pm,
£6 - £8
The New Art Gallery Walsall, WS8 7BG.
Call 01922 654400

Show In A Week Musical Theatre Workshop (Ages 6-11)
Thu at 10am - 3pm, £10.50
Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery, 33 3H.
Call 0121 466 3232

Check out full listings in the ticket in Friday’s Express & Star
**Young musicians show their mettle**

THE National Youth Orchestra of Great Britain returns to Birmingham for its annual concert as part of its meatiest summer to date.

Under the baton of Sir Mark Elder, of the Halle Orchestra, the teenag- ers perform Mahler’s epic Symphony No 9 alongside the world premiere performances of Re-greening by NYOGB, at the city’s Symphony Hall tomorrow evening (Friday).

The orchestra’s young composers will be presenting a free performance of some of their works at the Symphony Hall foyer at 6pm, before the 7.30pm concert. See www.thh.co.uk or call 0844 338 5000.

Following a two-week residency in Birmingham, the orchestra travels to Aldeburgh, the BBC Proms and Ber- lin. NYOGB’s 14 to 19-year-old mem- bers are drawn from across the UK and this year nine of the 163 talented teens hail from the West Midlands. Among them are double bassists Harry Atkinson (Birmingham) and Patrick Phillips (in memory of Tutor judges — with notorious touring show The Circus of Hor- rors.

At Bolton’s Robin 2 venue tonight (Thursday) the audi- ence will get close up and personal with some truly bizarre, and sometimes horrifying, performers.

Lord’s Circus of Horrors undeadRingmaster Doktor Haunz, the shows cast of freaky characters can include Cap- tain Dan, the demon dwarf, The Mongolian Laughing Boy, Madam Guaco, Russian Vincushka and the grizzly bear, Hamish Heltmeets.

A circus element comes with performers including the girl in the bottle and Anastasia IV the blade walker, five whirled baconettes from the Voodoo Warriors and a bevy of burlesque beauties. Plus a multitude of shocks and sur- prises from the most bizarre acts around.

Advance tickets cost £15 or £16 on the door. Call 01902 401211 or see the www.therobin.co.uk website.

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FREAKS and feathers will surround you at the Carnival of the Bizarre,Prepare to be shocked and amazed by a blend of weird variety acts and burlesque from the same people who stunned audiences — and the Britain’s Got Talent judges — with notorious touring show The Circus of Hor- rors.

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**Influentiel art of Japan on display**

AN exhibition at Wolverham-pton Art Gallery features images created by 19th century Japa- nese artist Utagawa Hiroshige. Hiroshige’s Japan and the Sta- tions of the Tokaido Road fea- ture a collection of landscapes that the artist was commis- sioned to create on the new road between the old capital Kyota and Edo, which became Tokyo.

The woodblock prints, on dis- play at the Licfield Street gal- lery until November 21, had an influence on the Impressionists and even today’s Manga comic art. It also the first touring exhi- bition to come to Wolverham-pton from Oxford’s prestigious Ashmolean Museum.

**Punk’s not dead, at least for a week**

IT’S a punk rock week ahead in Birmingham and the Black Country.

Slam Dunk favourites Don Broco, whose new album Auto- matic comes out tomorrow, have sold out their gig at Birming- ham Institute’s Temple venue on Wednesday.

The Dipheth venue hosts San Francisco punk veterans The Avenues on Monday and Aunis’ hardcore outfit Break Even on Thursday (August 13). That’s the same night US outfit A Wilhelm Scream play 02 Acad- emy 3, Teenage Bottlerocket the Shude Rooms, and White Punks On Dope versus The Tubes play Blaton’s Robin 2.

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**Dancer to make her last UK performance**

A WORLD famous dancer will return to Birmingham Hippo- drome for her last ever UK perf- ormance.

Sylvie Guillem will be per- forming Life in Progress, featur- ing existing and new works by choreographers who have influ- enced her career. Performances on September 8 and 9 will be the last by the former star of the Paris Opera Ballet and The Royal Ballet in Britain.

Promoted to the rank of Étoile by Rudolf Nureyev at the age of 19, the French dancer has performed with many of the world’s leading companies, including the Paris Opera Ballet and The Royal Ballet. Her final UK performances will be in Japan in December. See www.birminghamhippodrome.co.uk or call 0844 338 5009.

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By Leigh Sanders

views down to the beach offering a host of options to choose between. But you don’t even have to head down to the sand yet. There’s plenty to do just where you are.

Tired from your long journey down? First of all, head straight for the leisure complex. The indoor heated pool and spa offer somewhere relaxed to spend some quality time. There is also a sauna and steam room and a gym.

For the perfect overview of its quaint little harbour, then the Tregenna Castle Estate is the perfect place to base your visit. The bay-view rooms offer spectacular views down over the shops, bars and ice-cream parlours that line the old harbour. You can also plan excursions by foot with walks from the harbour itself.

Summer holiday fun!

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THE SEASHORE

This is still a working port, and you can watch lazily as the fishermen bring in the latest catches you know will be adorning the array of seafood restaurants for you to sample later on. Most of the activity is to be found here, particularly for youngsters. They will want to head straight to Patsea As you sponge - harbor amusements full of fun.

As you sponge - harbor amusements full of fun.

While here, Kudos simply has to be visited. Situated on Fore Street, it is a real Aladdin’s cave chocked from floor to ceiling with wonderful unique items the owner has sourced from trusted collectors around the world. Once the town has been scoured it is worth heading up towards what is known as The Island. A grassy hill behind the harbour, it can be accessed via a series of narrow back streets that house a number of independent art galleries.

On ascending, you will find the smallest of chapels providing views that will amaze. If you are lucky enough, a pod of dolphins will swim past too to welcome you.

When you have done as much or as little exploring as you like it is time to head back down to town and sample some of that food. If you like fish and are staying at the Tregenna, then it is worth one last trek back to base to sample The Brasserie.

Exceptional service and delightful food will leave you stuffed and ready for sleep, but not before visiting the hotel bar next door and settling into one of the luxurious sofas adorning the entrance hall.

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lose, the pressure mounts – and with each one they cause. Phillip Schofield is to win the jackpot of the series.

The nerve-racking game of skill, dexterity, reaction, wit and wisdom within the confines of a large transparent cube. Each celebrity has only nine lives, and with each one they lose, the pressure mounts to win the Jackpot of £250,000 for their chosen causes. Phillip Schofield is on hand to provide words of encouragement. Last in the series.
Sadie Sink and Omar Jake Robinson, Jim True-Frost, makes a deal with the truth regarding Ruby’s closer to discovering the troubled. Bob edges ever closer to discovering the truth regarding Ruby’s identity, and how he came to be in Midsomer Oaks, as landlady is crushed to death by a giant box during a magic show still held deep in Midsomer Oaks, protected by Captain Tom and9 Squadron. In a new novel, Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R) 8.00 Plays with words. Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R) 8.00 Plays with words. Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R) 8.00 Plays with words. Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R) 8.00 Plays with words. Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R) 8.00 Plays with words. Buddy Munro experiment with the way war was waged. Last in the railways influenced working and styling the hair of real brides on their big days. Last in the grand final, creating avant-garde cuts and styling. (R)
Waltz do Steps and Son, Last of the Summer Wine, The Australian Outback, Up Pompeii, Tilly’s Death Do Us Part and Are You Being Served? have in common? Well, in addition to being among one of the best-loved and most successful sitcoms in the BBC archives, they all started life as episodes of Comedy Playground. The anthology, which aired between 1964 and 1975, featured one-off comedy joints, with the best- received forming to full series. The current novelty episode went on to be a truly legendary classic – Sharat. On the Moor, or Bernard Spott and the Exploiting Whose Cushion, anyone? – but the hit rate was high enough for the BBC to revive the former last year with three more pilots. And now one of them, Mike’s Mountain, has been renamed Mountain Goats and gives a despairing run – and some may think that given the Comedy Playground track record, it’s got a li’l to live. Luckily, the signs are promising as the new series does have a great cast in its favour, including Sharon Rooney who is probably best known for her acclaimed performance as troubled Rae in ‘It’s Brighton, Fat Diary’. She’s certainly enjoying her latest role, especially as it’s provided her with a change of pace.

She told Radio Times: “Comedy has been nice to do because My Fat Diary was quite emotional. I don’t think I’ve ever laughed so much in a job. They give us an outside view and we’re laughing along with the whole time.”

Hopefully, the audience will be just as amused. For those who missed the pilot it was described by the BBC as an ‘energetic, comedic joint set around the antics of a ragtag group of Mountain Rescue volunteers. Set in the Highlands, the series takes us from pull to hillside as our somedreadful family try to save walkers, climbers, dogs and, most often, themselves.”

In particular, it focuses on the young, enthusiastic, and more than a little naive Connor (Kevin Manzie), who has just joined the team. He’s learning under the supposedly watchful eye of Jimmy Chisholm, who turns out to be an old hand – although organisational is not his strong point.

Other characters include Bernie Kennedy (Henderson), the team’s head of operations, and Julie (Rooney), a young female paramedic. In fact, one of the most striking aspects of the pilot was that for a show about mountain rescue, a surprising amount of the action took place in a pub.

We’re promised some location filming in the series proper, so we may get a better sense of the great outdoors that this series will be about. In this first episode, Connor continues to learn the ropes, but his mum isn’t particularly happy about his new career, and no wonder, given that Jimmy proves he can’t really be trusted with his own safety until he burns his house down. Is Connor’s first rescue mission going to be finding a new home for his fellow rescue.

Best of the rest

**Jimmy Chisholm (left) stars in Mountain Goats, Friday, BBC1, 10.35pm**

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**THEFAST TICKET**

**Dangerous Company, Channel 5, 3.15pm**

A successful businesswoman has a charmed life – a good career and a happy marriage – until one day things start to unravel. As she starts misplacing things, loses track of time and even fails to recognise her husband, she seems to have inherited the dementia that killed her mother – but it turns out something more sinister is at play, leaving her desperate to prove her sanity. Thriller, starring Alicia Leigh Willis, Rick Flanagan and Melissa Marty. (105)

**TUESDAY**

**The Hand That Rocks the Cradle, BBC1, 11.25pm**

A doctor is caught molesting a patient and commits suicide, after which his wife has a miscarriage. She blames his victim for her losses and plans to get revenge, infiltrating the unsuspecting woman’s house as a nanny and playing twisted mind games to destroy her life. Thriller, starring Rebecca De Mornay, Annabella Sciorra, Julianne Moore, Matt McCoy and Emir HUD. (90)

**MONDAY**

**Flying to the Ends of the Earth, Channel 4, 8pm**

Arthur Williams travels to the deserts of northern Australia, the island of the Coral Sea and the jungles of Papua New Guinea, where flying is the only way in and out. He first visits a running a cattle station almost as big as Wales, where he counts around thousands of cows in a tiny aerial ballet, before flying on to meet the Turners, a family, who bought their own desert island in the Coral Sea in 1961. Finally, Arthur joins the flying missionaries of Papua, who brave perilous jungle airstrips to bring supplies. (60)

**THURSDAY**

**Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, BBC2, 12pm**

A washed-up American football player tormented by the death of a friend faces a difficult reunion with his dying battered drama, starring Paul Newman. (58)

**FRIDAY**

**Grose Pointe Blank, Friday, BBC1, 11.35pm**

A hitman takes the chance to combine his latest assassination job with a trip back to his home town for a school reunion. The occasion starts to get complicated when an old flame turns up and rekindles their lost romance – while a rival killer harasses him to join an assassin’s union. Black comedy drama, starring John Cusack. (97)
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THE regional dating service, run by the dating experts who have been established since 1990. REAL people in your region.
At the wheel of Blue Bird

Pendine Sands came alive as spectators watched a commemorative run of the iconic 350hp Sunbeam on the 90th anniversary of Sir Malcolm Campbell’s World Land Speed Record of 150mph.

The National Motor Museum, Beaulieu, marked the anniversary with a demonstration run in the restored Sunbeam with Sir Malcolm’s grandson Don Wales (pictured right) at the wheel.

Don, who is also a Land Speed Record holder, said: ‘I was thrilled to be given this amazing opportunity to sit at the wheel of my grandfather’s car back at Pendine where he set his record. It was an honour both to follow in his footsteps and to drive this iconic car on such a special occasion.

My grandfather (pictured below) was a remarkable man and for us to remember him and honour some of his achievements in this way is very humbling. I really must thank Beaulieu ...
Fashionable sense with Mokka SUV

Small Crossovers should be fun and fashionable but that doesn’t mean they can’t also be versatile, capable and practical too. Like Vauxhall’s little Mokka? Perhaps.

Mokka buyers are people likely to be enthusiasts for life rather than for cars. So they may not care that this car isn’t quite as sharp and wieldy as a rival Nissan Juke, nor does it have the ‘big SUV’ polish of a comparable Skoda Yeti. Instead, there’s a potentially pleasing compromise between the two.

Under the bonnet, there are three main engine options, the most affordable, as ever, being the least desirable of the trio, the 2WD-only 115PS petrol 1.6-litre variant which, with only 155Nm of torque, needs to be rowed along a little with the gear lever – a stick that only offers you five speeds.

A better bet for petrol people is the Mokka we tried, the 140PS 1.4-litre turbo. Sixty is just 9.4s away on route to 118mph, so it’s usefully more rapid, and there’s a healthier 200Nm of torque.

Despite all this and the optional inclusion of 4WD, the provision of a 6-speed gearbox and more modern mechanics mean that this pokier 1.4 is actually cheaper to run than the feebler 1.6.

The most practical engine choice though is the one most buyers will probably select, the 130PS 1.6-litre CDTi diesel capable of a top speed of around 119mph and rest to sixty in around 10s.

You get all the main mechanical choices with this unit – so you can specify your car with 6-speed manual or automatic transmission and with or without 4WD.

Perhaps more importantly, you get a lot more pulling power – 300Nm in all. Every Mokka is theoretically capable of towing a braked trailer of up to 1200kg in weight, but this diesel variant is the only one that’ll really take such a task in its stride.

This Mokka sets its own course amongst small Crossovers. Though supermini-based, like a Nissan Juke, it’s nearly as big inside as a family hatch-style Crossover like Nissan’s Qashqai. But whatever your thoughts about this car’s size, you’ll probably agree that the way this Mokka looks goes along way towards selling it. Cute and individualistic without being wilfully outlandish in the manner of a rival Nissan Juke.

Not too long ago, it was hard to think of a more conventional brand than Vauxhall. But that was then. Here’s how the company is thinking now: looks a lot more appealing doesn’t it?

True, this isn’t the sharpest handling car of its kind but its as good as it needs to be. Nor is it as affordable as some might expect – but that’s only an issue if your comparison is with something smaller, much less well equipped and probably more feebly powered.

Look clearly at what you actually get for what you actually pay and the Mokka makes fashionable sense. With styling and size almost perfectly pitched, it’s practical, well equipped, affordable to run and, in 4x4 form, seasonally capable too. A car with an appeal that builds as your interest in it grows. The kind of car Vauxhall needs to make.
Volvo XC90 qualifies for grant

Volvo’s first petrol plug-in hybrid, the XC90 T8 Twin Engine, has qualified for the UK Plug-in Car Grant (PICG) scheme from the Office of Low Emission Vehicles (OLEV).

The Swedish firm’s new XC90 T8 Twin Engine is now available with an on-road price of £54,955 (including PICG). The XC90 is the first car to be built on Volvo’s first in-house designed and built platform, and powered by Volvo’s new Drive-E powertrains. With a combined output of 407hp, this seven-seat SUV emits just 49g/km of CO2, at the same time being able to go from zero to 60mph in 5.3 seconds.

Neatly the car’s platform is designed to incorporate the hybrid hardware without encroaching on interior space, with the necessary battery pack being neatly concealed within the centre console.

The Drive-E powertrain in the XC90 utilises both a 320hp petrol engine and 87hp electric motor. The Plug-in Car Grant (PICG) has been designed to encourage manufacturers to decrease the level of outputted CO2 exhaust emissions. To achieve this, hybrid vehicles must emit less than 75g/km, a minimal travelling range of 10 miles and must reach a speed of at least 60mph.

Companies choosing the XC90 T8 Twin Engine can benefit by writing down as much as 100 per cent of the cost against their income tax liability. Drivers who choose the XC90 T8 Momentum, for example, pay as little as £99.83 (40 per cent tax payer) whilst enjoying a full 7-seat SUV with 407hp.
**Brummies tighten grip on top spot**

BIRMINGHAM extended their lead at the top of the National League with a 5-1 victory against King’s Lynn.

The Surestop Brummies are now 18-points clear since the meeting was relaunched five years ago.

Dudley Stroke Association, is expected to pick up another three league points.

**Brittany’s a splash hit with fourth win**

SWIMMING sensation Brittany Horton produced a perfect best to win her fourth consecutive title at the British Summer Championships.

She was well placed in the build-up to a bunch sprint finish only for the rider directly in front to fail, leaving Dighton with no place to go and consequently ended up on the road.

“Zach (Wajtknecht) and Tom Perry were class acts yet again tonight and were both remarkable. There were a few who weren’t firing on all cylinders tonight but we’ll make sure they’re all fired up and ready for the big one next Wednesday.” Zach Wajtknecht raced back to form with a sublime 15-point maximum as well as successfully defending the National League Bronze Helmet against King’s Lynn No. 1 Jake Knight.

Tom Perry made a fantastic return from injury just dropping one point to an opposition rider.

Dan Greenwood proved a solid choice of guest once again as he picked up three race wins on his way to double-figures.

Alex Wilson showed plenty of positives ahead of his return to the reserve berths next week with guest George Hunter deserved more points for his efforts.

**Gelder comes close but is outpointed**

DUDLEY’S Jamie Gelder pushed Nathan Decastro close but was outpointed by a round in their rescheduled bout on Saturday night, writes Craig Birch.

Gelder was defeated 39-38 at Leek United Football Club, in a fight that had to be postponed for seven days.

They were ready to step into the ring the previous weekend at the Stoke Church Hall in Lichfield but riestering spectators caused it to be rescheduled.

The 23-year-old middleweight was previously stopped twice in the first round last winter, although he recovered from a broken foot through injury and low blows.

The Decastro loss makes it six straight defeats.

**Scorecard flattered opponents, says skipper**

Halesowen skipper Rich Brooker says Saturday’s scorecard flattered Easton after losing his side claim a winning draw.

Brooker’s side put up a powerhouse batting display with openers Ed Kilbee and Ben Stebbings in fine form to notch 82 and 69 respectively.

They went on to score 36-4 from their 55 overs, securing four league batting points along the way.

“Although we did not get off to the start we wished to have in the field, two wickets in two balls brought the game back under control with Eastnor never threatening to win the score.”

And Halesowen Chairman Richard Story added: “This is something that we hoped for the end of the season.”

A very good innings from both openers (Kilbee and Stebbings) set up the innings allowing us to score quickly at the back end.

**George hit top form to take the victory**

W&P Premier Division 1

George 238

Baldmore St Michaels 136

THE George hit top form against Baldmere recording a 102-shot win in a one-sided match.

Craig Wilson, 11; Mark Wilson (21-11) and Paul Greenwood (21-13) both gave a shot to be good.

This was increased to 69 shots after 30 overs.

Team-mate Matt Bickerstaff (22-13), Paddy Moroney (11-6) and Dee Poulett (21-13) all scored 20 overs.

The pair had set to ride in a tandem with would have contained Stoughton’s Anthony Neave as well, but after 220 entries were received by the organiser, all three team-mates were together with a four-man team from Wolverhampton Wheelers.

**Brittany is now geared to me hitting top form in New Zealand.**

“We spent in the pool or in the gym,” she said. “I know there is a lot of hard work ahead but I’m looking forward to it all.

It’s a great opportunity to be able to go out and compete in New Zealand.”

**Horton is now geared here for four weeks of intensive training before she jets off to the Youth Commonwealth Games.**

**Brittany Horston**

“It was perfect preparation as she prepares to jump up with Team England.”

“I am absolutely delighted to have won,” she said.

**Personal**

“I really didn’t expect to. Competing against girls that are older than me, I went into the race thinking more about my time than a place. But when I realised I’d finished in joint first place with a personal best I was over the moon.

“IT was the perfect result because all my training has been geared to me hitting top form in New Zealand.

“That is my main aim; I’m really looking forward to the Youth Commonwealth Games.

“IT is a very good innings from both openers (Kilbee and Stebbings) set up the innings allowing us to score quickly at the back end.

“A very good innings from both openers (Kilbee and Stebbings) set up the innings allowing us to score quickly at the back end.

“IT was the perfect result because all my training has been geared to me hitting top form in New Zealand.”

**Max Clegg with Heathens colleague Mike Neale. Picture John Hipkiss**

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Young cyclist is happy with a top 20 spot

HALESOWEN youngster Gabriella Homer admits simulating the professionals and competing in the Prudential RideLondon-South Girls Grand Prix lights up all expectations.

Homer produced a sterling performance during the nine-lap race to finish 19th, as Wales’ Ella Barnwell came home first.

Prudential RideLondon is a two-day festival of cycling and the Grand Prix allows riders such as Homer to compete on the closed streets of the English capital.

And the 14-year-old Hagley RC High School student claims that although she had a few nerves before it all began, she was ultimately content with her performance.

“I only really got nervous on the start-line, but I like the pressure and the noise. I enjoy it if anything,” said the Wolverhampton Wheelers rider.

“It wasn’t easy, because I didn’t have a lead-out or anything, so winning was never going to be easy. I’m pretty happy with top 20 though.

“I’ve been excited since I found out I got selected because you get to ride the same course as the pros. I found out last week and I’ve been buzzing ever since. I didn’t really sleep last night.

“I wasn’t in a team, which has its advantages and disadvantages. I raced my own race and didn’t have to fit into anyone else’s plan, which was perfect.

“I took it all in around me, because I was quite comfortable. I’ve done some of the Nationals this year and I’ve been quite comfortable.”

The Youth Girls Grand Prix was one of a number of events taking place over the weekend including the Women’s Grand Prix and the Under-16 Boys Classic and the RideLondon-Surrey 100.

The crowds packed the streets in support of all the riders.

Top swimmers in good showing at summer contest

THE top swimmers from Halesowen Swimmers competed in the 50m pool at Oakfield Forge 50m pool in Sheffield for the British Summer Championships.

The top ranked 24 swimmers in each age group were invited to compete in the all new end of season championships, of which Hans were Halesowen swimmers.

Chloe Finch, who also swims for City of Birmingham, showed her class by gaining a gold medal in the 400m free-style and silver in the 200m freestyle, proving that she is one of the best in Britain.

Mark Laiding also made two finals, coming seventh in the 50m butterfly and 10th in the 50m breaststroke.

Whilst James Churchfield finished 12th in the 50m butterfly and Liley Merril finished 17th in the 50m breaststroke.

Richard Smee, who also swims for Leodogran University, got into the final in the 50m breaststroke but dis-appointingly had to pull out due to illness.

It was a huge achievement for all five swimmers to compete at the championships.

Much activity to be ready for season

LAST season saw Old Hales first team placed fifth in a very competitive National 3 league.

Apart from those games that should have been won, the squad were close to a playoff position.

The club presentation dinner on July 3 marked the season and its successes.

The award winners included first team forward, Tom King as most improved player, centre Carl Robinson as best and fairest player and Director of Rugby Gary Cox for overall services to the club.

The club as a whole had a successful season.

The Coits showed promise with a young side deploying well and looking good for the new season.

This provides a long awaited all year round training surface, with floodlights, for the whole club to benefit from this coming season.

With joint working between the Rugby Section and the Association, the house and grounds have seen investment, including a mozzarine floor in the entrance lobby and money invested in ground and building uplift.

On the Rugby Committee, Ian Bullock remains as Chairman with Tim Shorey as Secretary and Tony Crocombe as Treasurer.

On the playing front Gary Cox continues as Director of Rugby with Dan Grant taking over as First Team Manager supported by Simon Hussey.

Anyone interested in supporting the club should visit their website or call 01562 883036 to book a place.

Brittany’s a splash hit with fourth title

It’s hammer time for Heathens

JOHNSON is blown off her course

HALLESWEN golfing star Felicity Johnson is itching to get back on the tour after a difficult couple of days at the Women’s British Open.

Johnson finished a disappointing eight over par at Turnberry, tied for 94th in the eventual 141 finish.

But after looking set to make the cut after day one and falling victim to some horrendous weather conditions on the Donald Trump-owned course on Scotland’s Ayrshire coast during her tee-time on the second day, the Midlands golfer is determined to put a bad event behind her.

She said: “It was a shame about the monsoon on the second day.

“In the six years or so I’ve played in the British Open and across my career it was some of the worst conditions I can recall.

“I play quite a high game and when the wind sets in that obviously makes it a lot tougher.

“On day two I teed off at 2.44pm when the morning session started at 6.30am.

“A huge advantage can be gained from tee-off times. The calmer conditions have a big say in things and unfortunately me and the girls teeing off around me had a tough time of it.

“Links golf is always tough because on the greens you only get to play it two in three times in the year.

“My short game has never been as good as it may should be. But I did feel like I could have had a good week, particularly after finishing the first day so well.”

There was no much time for Johnson to recover as she flies out to Prague for a European Tour event before she heads to her regular base of Florida for three weeks of LPGA competition.

Sinclair slots home a hat-trick for Villa

NOTTS Forest 3 Villa 3

WINGER Scott Sinclair was at his sparkling best as he slotted home a hat-trick in their pre-season friendly at Nottingham Forest.

Sinclair’s treble put the claret and blues in control, after Forest striker Dexter Blackstock broke the deadlock inside the first 30 seconds.

There was a glut of late goals that went against the visitors, with strikes from captain Harry Lanbury and skipper Mark Sinnar scoring a draw.

Villa had barely drawn breath before Blackstock slotted under goalkeeper Mark Bunn.

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