The race begins – runners set off on the 10 kilometre Black Country Run in Halesowen, helping charities and starting July’s Black Country festivities.

MORE than 1,000 runners were out pounding the streets in force at the weekend as they took to the road to complete the Black Country Run.

The run, which last year raised more than £27,000 for different charities, started at 8am for the 10k runners, with the 5k family fun version of the run commencing at 11.30am.

A total of 72 charities were selected by the organisers for runners to raise money for, although they could also choose other charities. Some of the charities supported by the run were: Birmingham Children’s Hospital, County Air Ambulance, Barnardos, Access Children’s Hospice, Multiple Sclerosis Society and British Heart Foundation. Local charities were also supported, including: the Beacon Centre for the Blind, Sandwell Parents for Disabled Children, Langley Youth Theatres and Halesowen Cycling and Athletics Club.

Alan Bowler, former president of the Halesowen and Rowley Regis Rotary Club, who organised the event said: “It was a truly fantastic day. It was wonderful to see so many people out in the community enjoying themselves.”

“I started the event under the name of the Halesowen fun run in 2012 when we had around 400 participants. It’s grown year on year to have 600 people running in 2013 to between 750 and 900 in 2014 and 1,000 in 2015. This year we had 1,200 runners.

“Over the years we’ve raised more than £77,000 for different charities and the community has supported us every step of the way. It’s one of the major community events for us and each year it goes from strength to strength. People from across the UK come to compete.”

School resists influx of pupils

A REPORT on saving money for Dudley Council has suggested charging primary schools for the cost of running crossing patrols.

The council, which is facing huge cuts in Government funding, has discussed at cabinet level the proposals to move to a ‘cost neutral service by re-charging schools for the cost of providing school crossing patrols’.

The move could save the council £260,000 a year for the next three years but opposition at the Labour-run council labelled the idea a ‘tax on road safety’.

Councillor Glen Williams, leader of the council, said: “We are in touch with our lawyers. We have taken a few more pupils from Coseley but not to the extent that the council would be charging us.

Dudley Council’s education boss Councillor Ian Cooper said: “We’re extremely disappointed. It’s one of the major community events for us and each year it goes from strength to strength. People from across the UK come to compete.”

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A FAMILY OWNED AND RUN BUSINESS FOR OVER 30 YEARS AND COUNTING
Police misconduct probe after suicide

FOUR West Midlands Police officers will face misconduct investigations after a child protection from a vulnerable missing man in the Black Country.

The Independent Police Complaints Commission (IPCC) launched probe into the death of Kazimierz Radloff, from Dudley, who was found in West Bromwich on July 6 last year and an inquest in August found he had committed suicide.

Two days before his body was found, relatives told police that he had indicated he intended to take his own life.

The IPCC’s investigation found police initially treated him as someone in breach of bad conditions rather than as a vulnerable missing person.

 Checks

A series of failings by police officers during the investigation were highlighted in the report.

An officer failed to tell his colleague that Mr Radloff had threatened to harm himself, while another officer did not carry out background checks on him, which would have revealed he was a suicide risk.

The IPCC ruled that another officer failed to launch a missing person investigation despite knowing Mr Radloff had threatened to take his own life.

Following the IPCC’s investigation, the force concluded three of the four officers had failed to answer over gross misconduct. But the IPCC said there was no indication that earlier interventions by police would have prevented Mr Radloff’s suicide.

West Midlands Police declined to comment further.

Community college put into special measures

A SCHOOL in Brierley Hill has been put into special measures after a damning Ofsted report.

Inspectors from the education watchdog have criticized Thorsa Community College, saying there are serious failings in academic standards in a school which has 3,066 pupils. They also highlighted the standard of teaching as ‘insufficient’. The school was said to have an “inconsistent” approach to SEND and “poor” SEND provision. The report said there was “inadequate” progress for pupils with SEND.

Principal Andy Cox said he accepted Ofsted’s findings and efforts had been made to tackle the problems highlighted.

 Improved

The inspectors have also said: “The quality of teaching, learning and assessment across the school has improved since the previous inspection but it is not yet consistently good. Pupils make increased progress as a result of better teaching but variations remain for some groups of pupils. Senior leaders know that more to be done.”

“School governors are unsophisticated about safeguarding and the school’s approach is inconsistent,” the report said.

Principal Mr Cox said: “We accept the findings from Ofsted, some of which are related to issues we were working on in the way we kept records, others to student attendance rates. They have been for the most part, quickly resolved. We have also recently made appointments to increase the capacity of the leadership team to continue to drive forward improvements in the quality of learning and in our results.”

“The safety, wellbeing and education of all pupils at Thorsa remains our highest priority, and we will work together to continuously raise standards at this college,” he added.

He said: “I urge everyone connected with Thorsa to read the report in its entirety.”

Mrs Stanyard with her mother Edith Jones, resident at closure-threatened Russell Court care home since 2011

Mrs Stanyard, who is also connected with the home, who are being offered plans for the closure of Russell Court care home on September 30.

Russell Court is the last council-run residential care home for the elderly in Dudley.

“I am so angry about it,” said Mrs Stanyard, who is also concerned about the eight other permanent residents at the home. “It is unfair to these old people who are being moved from pillar to post. My mum thought she was going to be there for the rest of her life. I cannot fault the home. The care is exemplary.”

There are 66 people employed at the home, who are being offered voluntary redundancy or to move to vacant positions in the borough. The council has cited the cost of work to update the home as the reason for closure, estimating it would cost around £1 million.

The daughter of a 95-year-old dementia patient has told of her outrage that her mother will have to be moved for the second time due to the closure of a council-run care home.

Edith Jones has been a resident at Russell Court care home on Overfield Road, Dudley, since 2011. She moved there after the closure of another council-run care home, Amb集成电路 House, on King William Street, Stourbridge.

Her daughter, 70-year-old Mau

Police misconduct probe after suicide

Firefighters tackle blaze at timber merchants

TWENTY firefighters attended a major fire in Brierley Hill that saw part of a timber merchants business go up in smoke.

Crews were called to the blaze at around 3.30pm on Saturday after pass-
ers-by spotted smoke coming from Woodstock Timber Supplies Ltd, on Old Bush Street.

Plumes of smoke were spotted by shoppers at the nearby Merry Hill shopping centre.

West Midlands Fire service deployed three appliances following the emer-

gency calls, and asked for a further ap-


pleased her colleagues of the initia-

tions. Mr Jones was described as "a man in the Black Country.

He added: “I urge everyone connected with Thorsa to read the report in its entirety.”

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Police seize another major cannabis haul

A HAUL of cannabis plants worth more than £400,000 has been made by police in a raid on a house in Halesowen.

Officers discovered the drug growing and sat up in Springfield Road, Halesowen, last week.

West Midlands Police were carrying out inquiries when they found six rooms in the property were being used to cultivate cannabis.

A total of 836 plants, worth at least £300,000, were found in the building.

West Midlands Police Cannabis Disposal Team tweeted: “The electricity had been abstracted illegally which required extensive work to make the house safe.”

Police in the Black Country are raiding a cannabis farm an average of every three days — according to figures which show £9 million worth of drugs were seized in a year. Compared with last year, the number of factories discovered has shot up from 86 to 129.

West Midlands Police discovered £8,883,000 worth of cannabis in the region from April 2015 to April 2016. This was a decrease of more than £1m from the previous year.

Despite a drop in the value of cannabis found, the number of cannabis farms discovered has risen. In 2014/15 the illegal set ups were discovered by police in the Black Country, in 2015/16 there were 129 found. These figures reveal cannabis farms now tend to be smaller but more common.

Police say cannabis farms ‘are very dangerous places’, often with by-passed and overloaded electrical circuits run close to water-filled pipes.

The plants can also cause floorboards to rot, which presents the dangers of collapse.

DOORSTEP tricksters have swindled the public out of hundreds of pounds in donations for Dudley church by pretending to collect for the church campaign group, which is nearing the final stages of its restoration project to open the Grade II-listed church.

Group chairwoman Deb Brownlee said: “Our genuine appeals will be seen in the media and social media, and do not involve going to people’s doors.

The preservation group is warning the public to be on the lookout for any further bogus collectors who attempt to use the name of their charity.

Mrs Brownlee said the gang, believed to include a woman and two children, were seen in Moos Road, St John’s Road, Highfields Road and High Street.

The con comes as a blow to the group, which was allowed to complete the final stages of its restoration project to open the Grade II-listed church.

Tech institute call is backed by MP

DUDLEY North MP Ian Austin has called on Government to support the creation of a Dudley Institute of Technology. The Government is establishing Institutes of Technology across the country to improve engineering, manufacturing and digital technology skills.

Dudley College has bid to host the Black Country’s institute at its town centre campus, where it is building the £11 million Dudley Advanced Learning Centre.

Labour MP Mr Austin, who has worked with the college and manufacturers to support the new centre, said: “Our technology industries and new jobs will replace the one we have lost in the West Midlands, but to get behind these exciting plans for an Institute of Technology.”

Speed bumps aim to slow the traffic

EXTRA speed bumps are being added to a road near Dudley town centre to slow traffic. ‘Speed cushions’ are being installed and warning lines painted at St James’s Road in a bid to get motorists to slow down.

Caretaker found guilty over tunnels drug farm

A CARETAKER has been found guilty of allowing a £650,000 cannabis factory to operate in the former nuclear bunker, Drakelow Tunnels, near Kinver.

After a jury returned a majority verdict finding of his guilt, Wayne Robinson, of Marlpool Lane, Kidderminster, was told by the judge to expect a prison sentence.

Police who raided the Second World War former aircraft factory, under Kingsford Park, in November, 2013 discovered a fully grown cannabis farm in an area of the tunnels, which is about the size of three rooms.

They also found hydroponics growing equipment including heating, lighting and ventilation fans used in cultivating the drug.

Robinson, who was caretaker of the site owned by his brother, and also had his own log cabin business nearby, denied any knowledge of the cannabis farm.

He told the court he had rented that part of the tunnels to two men for the storage of car parts. He only knew them as ‘Thomas and Fabian’ and they paid him £200 a month in rent.

He also claimed taintment, including heating about the cannabis farm, he would not have allowed women to have any idea to have taken place in the tunnels. This included holidays of various groups of tourists visiting the tunnels for events, which included Evil Rising in July 2013 when more than 300 people were chased by 100 actors dressed as monsters.

Robinson was granted bail after the jury had returned a majority verdict finding of his guilt, Wayne Robinson, of Marlpool Lane, Kidderminster, was told by the judge to expect a prison sentence.

The former England star pled not guilty to a charge of racially aggravated harassment during a hearing at Dudley Magistrates Court last week.

Gazza, 40, of Poole, Dorset, arived at court dressed in a dark suit and spoke to confirm his name, address and date of birth during the half hour hearing.

The Crown Prosecution Service decided to press charges following a complaint about the former footballer’s conduct during his ‘Evening with Gazza’ show on November 30. The comment was allegedly made in reference to a security guard.

He arrived to a media scrum outside the court and stopped to sign autographs for fans.

Former England football star Paul Gascoigne will stand trial in Dudley in September after appearing in court in the town over a racist comment he allegedly made.

The form er England star, 49, of Poole, Dorset, appeared in court in the town over a racist comment he allegedly made.

After pleading not guilty to the charge, Gascoigne is now due to face a one-day trial in Dudley on September 19. District Judge Graham Wilkin- son told him: “You are on unconditional bail to return to this court on September 19 at 9.30am. “It is an impeachable offence if you don’t turn up. “If you are not here on time, the trial will go ahead in your ab- sence.”

NEWS IN BRIEF

Council earmarks £2.4m for carers

DUDLEY Council has earmarked £2.4 million to support services to help vulnerable people, including carers.

It has been working with the Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners to test and evaluate different aspects of its services to improve support for carers. It will see the introduction of a Carers’ One Stop Shop to improve access to support and information.

Lloyds cuts means bank branch closes

THE Lloyds bank branch in Nether- ton is closing down.

The branch in Halesowen Road is closing in October as part of a series of closures by the banking giant.

It has made the decision to close the Netherton branch because it already has another branch 1.3 miles away in High Street, Dudley, from which to serve the local area.

The closure was identified for closure over the Dudley bank branch for fewer customers.

The closures will not result in any compulsory job losses.

Nursery aims to cut waiting list

DUDLEY Council hopes that planning permission will be granted for a nursery in Netherton Park which will shorten the waiting list for places.

Plans for a new nursery next to the existing Netherton Park Nursery School were approved last week the council’s development control committee.

The premises will cater for 32 two-year-olds and is to be a single storey building with a play area and two metre wide access.

Community open day event at Top Church

A COMMUNITY open day is being held at Dudley’s Top Church on Saturday. The event at St Thomas and St Li ke Church in High Street will run from 10.30am to 4pm with the Churches Conservation Trust.

The premises will cater for 32 two year-olds and is to be a single storey building with a play area and two metre wide access.

Store building auction

POUNDLAND’s premises on Dud- ley High Street are up for auction, which show £9 million worth of drugs were seized in a year. Compared with last year, the number of factories discovered has shot up from 86 to 129.

These figures reveal cannabis farms now tend to be smaller but more common.

Police say cannabis farms ‘are very dangerous places’, often with by-passed and overloaded electrical circuits run close to water-filled pipes.

The plants can also cause floorboards to rot, which presents the dangers of collapse.

Former England football star Paul Gascoigne, centre, leaves Dudley Magistrates Court last week.

PAUL Gascoigne will stand trial in Dudley in September after appearing in court in the town over a racist comment he allegedly made.

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£35,000 spent on movie memorabilia

Around £35,000 was spent on movie memorabilia at an auction in Dudley. Collectors outbid each other at Baileys Hall auction house, run by Aston’s.

There were hundreds for hundreds but some items were snapped up for considerably less and an auction has price tags to suit all. But nobody was willing to stump up the cash for a Nut uniform worn by Richard Burton in the 1968 war movie Where Eagles Dare – with a guide price of between £7,000 and £10,000, it was the most valuable item on offer.

A kit worn by Christopher Lambert in 1986 film Highlander was bought by an online bidder for £900. The top uniform was purchased at Michael Caine in The Italian Job. The figure came for £480. But a robe which was possibly worn by Omar Sharif in Lawrence of Arabia went for just £60.

Relatively small amounts were also enough to purchase costumes worn by Hollywood father and son actors Kirk and Michael Douglas. A British uniform worn by Michael Douglas in Shining through went for £60 but a Nazi uniform worn by the same actor sold for more than double that.

Kirk’s A suit worn by his Kirk in Queenie fetched £55. Sean Connery proved a bigger attraction, as a jacket worn by him by spy movie The Russia House sold for £200. An original poster from Live and Let Die, Roger Moore’s first outing as 007 went for £550.

The auctioneers centrifuge around £35,000 was spent on the day with most bids being made online for the lots that came from three collections.

Urgent appeal for help as festival faces the axe

By Richard Gutteridge

The Dudley Festival of Music, Drama and Dance, which has run for more than half a century, is facing the axe due to a lack of organisers.

Numbers in the group puts which put on the show each year have plummeted and now the organising committee admit this year’s event may have been the last.

Hundreds of people take part in the event, which has run for 57 years, and now shows for the weekend at Dudley highlighting local talent in the arts.

Committee member Mary Burns and said they had struggled to attract people to help organise the spring event in recent years and was now issuing an SOS.

The festival is held over three weekends in March at Dudley College.

Chairman Gillian Bloore said: “It was a short of commitment from members and very short of helpers. We have more than 1,500 entrants for the event. It’s a very popular festival and we want it to continue into the future.

We have to organise the show and we’re not short on volunteers. It’s just a lack of organisers. The Dudley Festival of Music, Drama and Dance is just not getting the help it needs to keep going for another 57 years.

The festival has been run by the same group of people for many years. They have a lot of experience and we’re very grateful to them for all they’ve done.”

Standard

Mrs Bloore said: “The standard of people that enter is fantastic. Severa l of them have gone on to perform in London and we had one man who did rehearsals with Andrew Lloyd Webber and toured with Cats. It would be lovely to be in the event the group holds its annual meeting this weekend.

The festival was originally organised by Dorothy Poole and said they had struggled to attract people to help organise the spring event in recent years and was now issuing an SOS.

They were part of the organising committee which helped set up the first event. She was involved with the festival until his death in 1999.

Anyone interested in joining the committee can contact Mrs Bloore or one of the festival’s 150 volunteers. They are looking for people to help organise the festival this year.

Miss Black Country Abigail Cutler and Mr Black Country James Machin at RAF Cosford on their charity walk

IT was all about guts and glamour for Miss England Abigail Cutler when she tackled a charity challenge.

The reigning Miss Black Country and James Machin, who is Mr Black Country, are raising cash for disadvantaged children. They were part taking in an 101-mile sponsored trek from Dudley to Southport and called at RAF Cosford Museum on the way.

Abigail, 23, chose the route as she will be appearing in the grand final of the Miss England contest in Southport later this month. The pair won their respective titles in the Coughton Hotel, Bewdley, earlier this year. They have jointed forces to raise money for the Miss England charity Beauty with a Purpose.

Their route took them through Shropshire, then on to Shrewsbury and then to Birkenhead before arriving in Southport at the end of the three-day walk.

Dancer Abigail, who lives in Rowley Regis, said: “It’s for a good cause and the money is going to disadvantaged children at home and abroad. We hope to raise awareness about the charity.

“People have been showing their support by pressing their car horns and businesses have let us use their facilities. I took part in the London Marathon and James is due to do a triathlon, also in London.”

The Miss England extravaganza is due to be held at Southport Theatre & Convention Centre’s Floral Hall on July 21.

Don’t miss Peter Rhoads every Monday to Friday in your Express & Star

Cloudy2Clear Windows – Service With A Smile!

It’s been a crazy few months for Cloudy2Clear, a company which specialises in repairing windows which are steamed up and restored for a fraction of the cost of a new window, as any type of frame and now with a new 5 year guarantee. But it’s not just about saving people money, although that obviously helps. It’s also about independent people who have struggled since last year and I honestly feel that during the good times community perhaps didn’t focus on customer care as much as they should have done.

We make sure we turn up when we say we will, deal with your customer requests and leave your house as clean as a whistle. We often get comments back from customers on how much they really didn’t expect that sort of service which is why its very sad for the service industry as a whole.

Cloudy2Clear service Berkeleyuponfurneaux and Brian is finding that his approach is a major factor in success. The truth is that it’s not just the personal satisfaction that we get from doing a good job but also it makes good business sense get a huge amount of business from friends and family of people we’ve done work for, which just goes to show how much a little bit of effort is appreciated.

So, if your windows are steamed up, broken or damaged give Brian a call for a free quotation on 01384 211184 or email him at blake@cloudy2clear.co.uk and he’ll be happy to help!

Shop raid over illegal cigarettes led to court

A FORMER Stourbridge shopkeeper who admitted possessing illegal cigarettes for sale has been given a suspended jail term and ordered to carry out unpaid work.

Mazar Abbas, aged 31, pleaded guilty to two counts of possessing an article for use in connection with a fraud offence at Dudley Magistrates. The court heard Dudley Council trading standards officers visited Enville Street News in Enville Street, Stourbridge, in November 2015 accompanied by police and a tobacco sniffer dog.

A total of 265 packets of cigarettes and 41 packets of hand-rolling tobacco were discovered at the shop. None had been made for the UK market so they would have sold at a higher price and lacked health warnings. There were also 157 packets of counterfeit cigarettes.

Abbas, of St John Street, Dudley, was given a 12 week concurrent jail sentence for each of the five offences suspended for 12 months and was ordered to carry out 100 hours unpaid work. He was ordered to pay £1,000 costs and an £80 victim surcharge.

The court heard he was no longer involved in the running of the business.

Councillor Rachel Harris, Dudley Council’s cabinet member for health and wellbeing, said: “We are pleased to see the shop owner has been caught and sentenced. Dudley Town Centre has a zero tolerance approach to illegal cigarettes and we are determined to have these stores closed down.

Stop the smoke, save money and support a great cause.”

Kent-based group buy motor dealers

TOYOTA and Hyundai dealerships in Stourbridge have changed hands in a deal which has seen Motorline Group increase its number of sites to 43.

Westlands in Bretten Lane, Ambleside, is part of the Westlands Motor Group which has been bought for £4.5 million by the Motorline Group. The company has been bought by Italian-based Westlands, which was established by Nik Zlazny, employs 200 staff and has 13 dealerships spread across England, Wales and Scotland.

The acquisition marks Motorline one of the UK’s largest Toyota brand partners with 13 dealerships in the UK as well as increasing the number of Hyundai dealerships from two to five.

Exhibition marking 40 years of lace guild

The Lace Guild, based in Stourbridge, is celebrating its 40th anniversary this year. The year has seen the opening of the new Enville Street Lace Museum in the town’s historic Red House Glass Cone in High Street, Wednesbury, on Sunday, July 17.

READER describes seeing a bloke using his phone in the car while driving on the whole story? Bari Cook

England Governor Mark Carney says he’ll be happy to help!

Cloudy2Clear Windows...wemakesaving money perfectlyclear...THE BEST OF PETER RHOSES
Aldi taking shape on former pub site

The dead of the Somme remembered at services
THE Black Country fell silent on Fri-
vacy service, starting at 7.30am.

As people came out to pay their re-
tes were laid as the war dead

Wreaths were laid as the war dead

The dead of the Somme remembered at services

Event began early to mark the 91st

The approval for the new homes

Homes plan gets the green light
FOURTEEN homes will be built on a

Plans for the flats, which will be

The new homes at the open site, which

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Jewellery stolen in village break-in

BURLINGTON made a property in a

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Carer convicted after disabled man bruised
Woodland clear-up after floods

Delay warning at Thorns Road
DEALERS are expected to continue for

It’s a right royal treat in The Mall
MEMBERS of a charity that protects

Volunteers up for PCC’s award
A VOLUNTARY counselling scheme

More parking spaces near shopping centre
NEW parking spaces are being cre-

Charity coffee boost
A STOURBRIDGE manufacturing company has raised more than £400 for charity.

IN BRIEF

Huge choice of popular fabrics & generous size restrictions
Quest for truth over the murder of Carl Bridgewater

True crime writer Simon Golding tells TOBY NEAL how he shed new light on a notorious child murder

AN author who says he has uncovered evidence which sheds new light on the unsolved murder of paperback Carl Bridgewater.

True crime writer Simon Golding, from Bridgnorth, has detailed his findings in a book which has taken nearly two years to write. He was also involved in a recent Channel 4 television documentary in which Bert Spencer – a convicted murderer who has lived under a cloud of suspicion that he killed 13-year-old Carl – was interviewed by a top criminologist.

Spencer vociferously denied any involvement in the 1978 killing, for which four men – who became known as the Bridgewater Four were convicted – but subsequently cleared by the Court of Appeal in 1997.

Carl is thought to have disturbed burglars while delivering a paper to Yew Tree Farm at Priestwood, in countryside near Stourbridge, and was shot dead at point blank range.

Golding’s book is called Scapegoat for Murder: The Truth About the Killing of Carl Bridgewater and was originally due to be published last September.

But Simon was approached by the television team and worked closely with them, and agreed to delay publication until after the documentary was broadcast last month.

It takes its “scapegoat” title from a phrase often used by Spencer.

Simon, who used to live near the scene of the killing, said: “It is a misnomer that I am in any way in support of Bert Spencer. On the contrary, I was trying to track this friend down as it was coming up to my 50th birthday.

“Of course, I know all about Spencer being a major suspect in the murder of the paperboy. This was when the Bridgewater Four campaign was starting up. I built up an old friendship with Spencer and I found him out I was a writer.

“In the early days I was a campaigner for the Bridgewater Four. Then, after my early dealings with Spencer, I got more involved.

True crime writer Simon Golding spent two years on the book and has written neither to exonerate nor incriminate Spencer.

“On many TV and other media interviews Spencer talks about ‘this book’ which is totally incorrect – I have full rights and Spencer has not actually read my book.

“I started writing the book and tried to be objective and I went through the process letting Bert have his right of reply, but also checking up on certain events where information was available.

“I had obviously interviewed Spencer face-to-face many times and I think it was fair to say he would paint himself in the best possible light. All my conclusions in the book challenge some of the information shared with me by Spencer.”

Simon added: “On many TV and other media interviews Spencer talks about ‘this book’ which is totally incorrect – I have full rights and Spencer has not actually read my book.”

He said the book was selling well and was in the Amazon bestseller list for true crime.

The scene of the crime that shocked the nation in 1978 – Yew Tree Farm, near Stourbridge.
No coherent plan for museum's move

I’ve yet to identify a coherent plan by Dudley Council regarding the closure of Dudley Museum and transfer of its permanent collection/exhibitions programme to Dudley Archives.

The Archives building in Tipton Road is beautiful, yet it was designed to house local and civic records – it seems it’s now being asked to transform into a display facility as well as storing archives. Therefore the only way to provide exhibition space is to build a museum extension. It would make sense to provide an all-round heritage museum on one site but nonsense if the purpose of the whole exercise is to save money.

I would like to see the permanent collection/exhibitions programme transferred where possible to Dudley’s existing museums – i.e. Brierley Hill & C Dudley Museum.

The element that really lets the building down is the unsafe park – a rough area full of potholes. Whatever happens, this area must be improved because it currently presents an appalling impression to visitors.

There is no indication either of what may happen to the staff of both buildings. Archives skills and museum skills aren’t the same. Will Archives staff have to retrain as they can double up as museum staff and be expected to cope with all the additional work?

Dudley Chronicle

M JONES
Volunteer at Dudley Archives

Now we must work together

REGARDLESS of which side we voted for, it is now time to put the differences aside and to make Britain better by working together.

For too long immigrants have been used as scapegoats. Truth is we British have in some ways neglected our country, letting it and its reputation decline.

This is our time to focus on Britain, our home. We must work together to ensure our young people are well educated, to work with communities and police to cut crime, to tackle anti-social behaviour and make our neighbourhoods safe and friendly, work with businesses to help sustain employment and growth.

It is time to put Britain back on the map as a nation of honest and hard working people. It is down to us to make a better future. So, help Britain thrive again and he respected as it once was. Otherwise, it will be too late to repair.

F ZARA
Brierley Hill

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

My brother-in-law was involved in an accident. A couple of years ago, my brother-in-law was in Sandwell Hospital and the guy in the next bed was an elderly motorcyclist, who said: “We buy the newest and best bikes when they come on the market, and just let it rip.” I once knew a guy who used to brag that he rode along the “Rabbit Run” at 140 mph. And what about clothing? Many riders wear black. Can they be seen clearly? And what about lights? They give others a chance to see bikes but how many do not bother to have them on.

The most important item is the Highway Code and speed limits. How often do motorcyclists ignore both of these? If they are involved in an accident, the riders are always said by their relatives to be “careless riders.” My wife and I frequent the Wolverley area. Both the A449 main road, and the road in and out of Wolverley village, are used by motorcyclists to ‘let rip.’

All road users should take care.

J COLE
Kingswinford

The Brexit blunder is not binding

NOW the consequences of an exit from the EU are becoming more apparent, I suspect some may be wondering if they have done the right thing.

I believe a referendum is fine as a barometer of public opinion but it should never be used in isolation to determine Government policy.

We democratically elected our MPs to make such decisions on our behalf. To delegate such major decisions to the people is an act of gross negligence and a sure sign of a weak and divided Government. Cameron has put the interests of his party before the interests of the country.

We would never trust the people to make such decisions. The Brexit referendum leaves the electorate at the mercy of such people. A referendum is not legally binding. There is still time to get out of this mess, if the Government has the courage to act.

M CLIFF
Wall Heath

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Royal family quiz helps to save the day
Grange E Guild

ACTING chairman Chris Holton presided over the June meeting at Grange Court, Stourbridge, giving a warm welcome to all members and visitors.

In her report, secretary Joan Williams announced that Grange Guild would be entering three teams in the annual inter-guild quiz at Stourbridge Football Club and several guild members would be attending the Federation’s annual luncheon at Vauvin’s restaurant, Stourbridge on July 25.

Treasurer Jill Attwood gave an up-to-date financial report and Marlene O’Hagan brought everyone up-to-date with items needed for the showbag. Next month she would like donations of stationery. The collection of copper coins was still going strong and donations for the food bank was also doing well.

Unfortunately the speaker for the evening was unable to attend and guild member Jacqueline Hill stepped in and saved the evening. She presented a very enjoyable quiz where all the questions concerned members of the Royal family. Small prizes were awarded to the winners and Jacqueline was given a vote of thanks by Chris.

The raffle was drawn with three lucky winners. The sales table consisted of plants which went well. The sales table for July will be kept under review.

Anyone interested in joining the guild can go along to a meeting as a visitor. Or, contact secretary Jean Williams on 01384 82439.

A STRAWBERRY tea was held in June as a 90th birthday tribute to Her Majesty The Queen.

A birthday toast was proposed by president Derek Conalry. There was a display of photographs taken at special events over the years, and as a result there was a lot of happy chatter as memories were aroused. All this was followed by a red, white and blue bring and buy sale to raise much-needed funds.

Members were congratulated for wearing the national colours. Special thanks were extended to Brenda Greenaway for providing the flower arrangements for the chairman’s table, also in red and white and blue. It was donated as an extra raffle prize.

Sally Fowler and Rennie Waters won the raffle prizes and chairman Enda Finnell wished the quiz team luck.

On July 11 at 7.30pm at the community centre, Ken Gallivan will speak about the Amish People.
It’s generation joy for super mom Joan, 85

“THEY took a lot of bringing up, but they were good children.”

These are the words of Joan O’Neill, mother of 11, grandmother of 24 and great-grandmother of 17 with another three on the way at her 85th birthday celebrations.

The huge family party saw four generations and 50 family members come together to honour its matriarch.

Joan, of Upper Gornal, and her clan arrived at the Conservative Club in Hill Street for her surprise bash, which was also attended by her sisters Irene, 91, and Ruth, 80 and her youngest great-grandchild Joshua, who is only two weeks old.

Joan said: “I can’t believe everyone is here. They took a lot of bringing up but they were good children. I couldn’t ask for a better family. The grandchildren are all very good, especially when they do the housework.”

Born in Worcester, Joan married Eddie in 1952, had 11 children. First came Michael, followed by Jerry, John, Maria, Chris, Stephen, Kathy, Bernadette, Angela, Eddie and Anthony.

Husband Eddie, Jerry and Eddie Jnr have since passed away but Joan’s remaining nine children and other descendants were in attendance at the family gathering.

Joan and Eddie used to run the Horse and Jockey pub in Upper Gornal during the 80s.

Reminiscing about growing up, Maria said: “The milkman used to deliver 12 bottles of milk every day, we used to get a sack of spuds each week and four loaves of bread every day.

“I don’t think we really appreciated it at the time how hard she had to work. She had it tough when we were growing up, because our dad was working away a lot.

“This is such a close-knit family, everybody is friends with each other.”

Joan O’Neill cradles two-week-old great-grandchild Joshua at the family party to celebrate her 85th birthday.
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Dudley Chronicle: July 7, 2016

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Sofa Style, Chatsworth House, Hayes Lane, Lye, Nr Stourbridge DY3 8RD

The pair’s vocals, particularly during Chiquitita blend beautifully and provide the foundations for many standout moments of the show. One forgets how – and this is difficult for me to write – great some of the music from Mamma Mia! is. Name of the Game, is an absolute classic. One final moment must go to the amaz-ingly energetic ensemble who seem to be running around the stage, doing acrobatics andhorn-inducing grunts all night long. But no-one quite gets close to the Da-rcel-battery powered pocket-pocket Louis Stockil as Pepper, whose performance during Does Your Mother Know comes close to stealing the show.

Mamma Mia! runs until Saturday September 5th, contact the box office 01902 338 5000, or log onto www.birminghamhippodrome.com.

Graeme Andrew

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Graeme Andrew
Support group work puts Jon in line for citizen award

A MAN who set up a support group for men struggling with depression and addiction is up for an Outstanding Citizen award.

Jon Mansell, aged 43, runs a drop-in group, Ex Boozehounds at the Hope Centre in Halesowen. He also writes a popular blog, detailing his own experiences with addiction and mental health issues.

Mr Mansell is up for the West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner’s Outstanding Citizen award and will find out if he has won at Birmingham Repertory Theatre on July 13.

He said: “The stuff from the Hope Centre got in touch a year ago after reading my blog and said that I could help there. Some days in the group there are two people, other days there are eight. It gives men the chance to focus on their demons and talk through their issues.

“We help each other through different things and relax. We support them and then their confidence builds and they strengthen.

“There is a lot of pressure on men. Take me, for example, people say that if I was dead I should be married, with kids, a 4x4 and a semi-detached house and good job – if you don’t have those, you’re a failure and that pressure is unhealthy.

“I am against that whole ‘just pull yourself together’ attitude but it does feel as though things are changing. I’m in the process of setting up another group. Attitudes are changing and we are moving in the right direction. I want to fight against the stigma and be upfront, honest and not ashamed. I was chuffed to bits to get the nomination.”

West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: “ Jon is putting his head above the parapet to help a group of people so often overlooked.”

Jon Mansell – support group

Jon in line for citizen award

Dudley Chronicle Thursday July 7 2016

Fun for all the family in park

MORE than 7,000 people are anticipated at a Dudley Park summer festival on Saturday.

Netherton Park is preparing to host entertainment for all the family from 10am. For younger visitors there will be a bouncy ship, giant inflatable slide, bungee trampolines and a host of attractions.

There will also be bric-a-brac and market stalls, craft and jewellery stalls and a classic car display, as well as Dudley Zoo staff bringing along a number of animals.

West Midlands Fire Service will be doing demonstrations on the day and there will be representatives from organisations including Dudley Lions, Compton Hospice, Dudley Forestry, Black Country Wildlife Trust, Coombebrook Causal Trust, Mary Stevens Hospice and St John Ambulance.

Richard Johnson, from the Friends of Netherton Park, said: “This year will be the 13th time we’ve had the event with it growing year on year.”

Children’s services leadership blamed

THREE-QUARTERS of children’s services departments across England are inadequate or require improvements, say Ofsted. These include Dudley, Birmingham and Sandwell’s children services.

Inspectors who looked at the problems nationwide blamed weak leadership and too-high caseloads for social workers as major reasons why some local authorities are failing to care for vulnerable children.

One in four authorities inspected under a new, more rigorous regime were judged inadequate – a five per cent rise on the previous round of inspections. A further 43 required improvement, but were regarded as good, while 23 authorities were providing good or outstanding services.

Chief inspector Sir Michael Wilshaw said the figures were unacceptable and added that while Ofsted published the names of underperforming local authorities, he could ‘barely summon up the names of poor managers’ as to why they were moving around the system.

Common features of inadequate services include children having too many different social workers, delays in making visits and a failure to see children alone. Poor leadership or supervision of social workers were also highlighted.

The report also stressed that failings were not because of funding constraints. Sir Michael said: “It’s about how well authorities are using their funding. Some of the highest spending local authorities were also the weakest.” It concluded that that the quality of leadership in an area was “the single most important factor” in the standard of protection given to children.

Sir Michael said: “There is clearly an ongoing need for improvement. While we have seen some green shoots of progress, too many areas are still failing the children they are charged with protecting. This report shows that the context of a local authority, including deprivation and funding, cannot be used as an excuse for poor performance. If some authorities can succeed in difficult circumstances, so can others.”

Support group work puts Jon in line for citizen award

A MONUMENTAL ‘lighthouse’ could stand at the centre of the redeveloped former Chance Brothers Glassworks site in Smethwick, say developers behind the proposed £10 million scheme.

A group aiming to renovate the Spoon Lane site with homes and new employment opportunities want the giant structure as a centrepiece.

World

The lit-up tower would pay homage to the Smethwick glassworks which provided optical components used in lighthouses around the world. The glass face on London’s Big Ben was also made there.

Designs show the structure overlook the M5. Much of the site, including the iconic seven-storey building next to the motorway, has fallen into ruin. The Chance Glass Works Heritage Trust want the green light to regenerate the area.

Homegrown horror movie getting Close

Tense moment – Emmy Award winner Glenn Close in a scene from horror thriller The Girl With All The Gifts

Jon in line for citizen award

Towering ambition for landlocked lighthouse

TOWERING ambition for a landlocked lighthouse

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West Midlands Police and Crime Commissioner David Jamieson said: “Jon is putting his head above the parapet to help a group of people so often overlooked.”

TOWERING ambition for landlocked lighthouse

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Teenager is locked up for causing death crash

A TEENAGER who killed a newly married telecoms engineer while speeding in his mother's car has been put behind bars for four and a half years.

Matthew Harding, aged 27, was working at the roadside in a Coseley street when he was struck by the Citroen Picasso. The 17-year-old who was behind the wheel had ignored warnings from his mother not to take her car.

One witness told police it appeared he had ‘not got a clue how to drive’, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard.

The driver, who cannot be named because of his age, had been distracted as he was trying to turn on the windscreen wipers and then swerved to avoid a parked car, the court was told.

The vehicle careered into two Virgin Media technicians, Mr Harding and his colleague Jermaine Buchanan, at the corner of Jack Holden Avenues, Woodcros.

Cannabis

The youth, from Tipton, had been driving at 47mph in the residential area and had smoked cannabis the night before.

Mr Harding, a father from Oldbury, had only got married a week before he was killed.

Danielle – his wife of just 10 days – had to make the ‘heartbreaking’ decision to turn off his life support machine after being told by doctors there was no hope, the court was told.

Sentencing the driver, Judge James Burbidge said it was clear the teenager knew nothing about the rules of the road and had made the deliberate decision to put the life of another person at risk.

The judge said: “This was a tragic and untimely death, a loss that will be felt by many in the community.

“Both victims, and their families, have been dealing with the consequences of this terrible incident. It is tragic that the life of one of them was cut short.

“Mr Harding was an ordinary member of the community, an ordinary man who had his whole life ahead of him.

“By his actions, he has destroyed Danni’s whole life.”

Richard Guttridge

By Richard Guttridge

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Bill’s day at Beacon

A BEACON Centre user has celebrated his 100th birthday with a party at the Sedgley-based service for visually impaired.

Bill Richards, marked the big day on June 18 when staff organised a party for him.

Mr Richards was born in Wolverhampton and, apart from a 25-year spell living near Croydon, has lived in or around the city all his life.

He joined the army in 1940 with the Royal Engineers and after leaving he completed an apprenticeship within the printing industry. He said: “I love coming to the Beacon Centre and have made a lot of friends.”

Zoo weaves web of success for work to save rare spider

DUDEY Zoo weaved a web of success as it scooped a gold award for its project with the fen raft spider (Dolodes plantarius).

The Castle Hill attraction was awarded gold in the British and Irish Association of Zoos and Aquariums (BIAZA) 50th Anniversary awards for the project which began in 2011.

Working with other zoos around the UK, Dudley co-ordinated the national programme which involved keepers acting as foster parents to 2,400 fen raft spiders, looking after them for two months, feeding and caring for them until they were strong enough to be released into their natural habitat.

Zoo conservation officer Chris Leeson, said he was thrilled that the zoo had picked up the award.

He said: “We’re thrilled to be recognised by BIAZA for our work with Fen rafts. Rearing them in captivity increases their slim survival chances in the wild to over 90 per cent.

Without projects like this one, where we’ve been able to give the species a helping hand to re-populate and hopefully help secure its future, it would’ve been difficult for the anachnid to recover on its own.

Dudley Zoo’s Caroline Howard played ‘mum’ to 400 one to two-week-old baby spiders. She individually fed each one five fruit flies every few days.

PLANS for an £11.7 million manufacturing training centre in the Black Country have been formally submitted.

The skills centre proposed for the former Thomas Dudley site, off Tipton Road, Tividale, would be built in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton. It is hoped it could open next year.

The facility would offer specialist training in toolmaking, foundry skills, pattern making and metal forming, becoming the latest training centre to launch in Dudley. Several similar bases have already been launched at campuses in recent years.

An artist’s impression has revealed a building with the main workshop decked out in the colours of the Black Country flag.

The centre is due to open in 2017 and it is hoped it will become the new institute of technology for the Black Country.

The scheme received £7.6 million of crucial funding, which was allocated by the Black Country Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), through its Growth Deal.

The plans are now due to go before Sandwell Council’s planning committee this summer.

Husseinman Nusairi, an LEP board member, said: “It’s great to see the plans have gone in.

“As we all know the Black Country has a long tradition of manufacturing excellence and we have seen a recent renaissance in the area. The LEP is focused on making sure we maximise that skill set.”

A design and access statement submitted alongside the plans confirmed the proposed black, red and white colour scheme for the workshop, drawing inspiration from the Black Country flag.

The report states: “We believe this reference will engender a sense of pride for the local community and make this an iconic building.”

In May it was revealed that the centre was going to cost £400,000 more than originally anticipated after a pipeline was discovered running underneath the site.

The report states: “The building has been designed to work as efficiently as possible on the split level site. The workshops location within the site aims to maximise the relationship of this element of the building with the existing foundry adjacent.”

An artist’s impression of the proposed new manufacturing training and skills centre in Tividale.
FOCUS ON KINGSWINFORD & WALL HEATH AREA

MP calls for re-opening of Bridgewater murder case

GAVIN Williamson, MP for South Staffordshire, has joined Dudley North MP Ian Austin in calling for the re-opening of the Carl Bridgewater case.

It comes after a TV documentary cast doubt on the alibi of the initial suspect, Bert Spencer. Mr Spencer has called the Channel 4 programme – Investigated – and is calling for By Jack Averry

was shot because he had disturbed a burglary.

As well as Mr Williamson, Dudley North MP Ian Austin has called on Home Secretary Theresa May to reopen the investigation into the murder of the Worsley boy 38 years ago.

Staffordshire Police have seen the 90-minute programme, Interview With a Murderer, broadcast on June 12.

The programme featured interviews with Bert Spencer, a suspect before the Bridgewater Four were strongly convicted of the killing, and claims to cast doubt on his cast-iron alibi.

Mr Spencer, who now lives in Lincolnshire, served 15 years in prison for the 1978 shooting of Hubert Wilkes at Holloway House Farm, Prestwood.

QUEST FOR TRUTH – see page 6

Two women hurt in crash

TWO people were taken to hospital after a car accident in Kingswinford which saw a wall part-de- moliished and a tree knocked over.

The accident, which occurred at midnight on Monday in Rangeworthy Road, left the silver Vaux- hall on its side.

Two women who were in the car which finished up on the drive of a bungalow in the street, were taken to hospital with minor in- juries.

Elizabeth Oldnall, aged 14, with her five-year-old brother Robert, aged 5, from Wall Heath.
THE top five roads where motorists have been caught speeding in the Black Country have been revealed.

One road in Halesowen clocked up almost 1,000 offences. On another a motorist was caught driving at 92mph, on the northbound carriageway of the 40mph A4123 Birmingham New Road.

A total of 870 motorists caught were on the A456 Manor Way in Halesowen, which topped the list of cameras across the region which were activated the most.

Second on the list of most triggered mobile cameras was the A498 Haloway Road in Old Hill with 505 activations. Third was Henwood Road northbound in Wolverhampton, which was activated on 428 occasions. Fourth was the A4123 Birmingham New Road northbound with 387 and fifth The Droversway eastbound in Wolverhampton with 311.

Halesowen North Councillor Karen Shade said she was not surprised Manor Way topped the list.

She said: “The police always do seem to be there, more than a lot of other places. There are also issues with the speed limit, as it changes from 40mph to 50mph. I think it’s not that clear for motorists to understand what exactly the speed limit is. Some of them just don’t care.”

The list of the top five highest speeds caught on camera in 2015-16 is topped by the northbound A4123 Birmingham New Road with one driver racing along at 125mph.

Second in was the A4041 QuEDGE ROAD in Great Barr which someone was caught driving at 112mph.

Coming in third was a driver who clocked at 85mph on the A41 Black Country New Road in Wednesbury, in a 40mph stretch, while a driver was captured doing 76mph southbound on the same road near the Swan Roundabout in West Bromwich. The top five is made up by a 73mph clocking on the southbound A4041 Trinity Way in West Bromwich.

The camera triggered the least was on the northbound stretch of Bournes Street and Brook Street in Sedgley, activated just 19 times.

A VOLUNTEER has helped to create a therapeutic balcony garden for patients at an outpatient hospital in Stechford.

The garden was created at Corbett Outpatient Centre, in Ambleside, by keen gardener Steve Saul.

Mr Saul came up with the idea with Occupational Therapist Erika Kosheleya during one of his routine appointments.

“We have had such a huge amount of support from staff and patients,” he said. “People have been bringing in plants and offering help. It’s been wonderful and I just don’t want the project to ever come to an end.”

The balcony garden, opened by Dudley group NHS Foundation Trust chief executive Paula Clark, includes a green roof, rose arch and large plant troughs filled with plants and flowers. It has transformed a run-down patient centre, in Amblecote, by keen gardener Steve Saul.

A VOLUNTEER has helped to create a therapeutic balcony garden for patients at an outpatient hospital in Stechford.

The garden was created at Corbett Outpatient Centre, in Ambleside, by keen gardener Steve Saul.

Mr Saul came up with the idea with Occupational Therapist Erika Kosheleya during one of his routine appointments.

“We have had such a huge amount of support from staff and patients,” he said. “People have been bringing in plants and offering help. It’s been wonderful and I just don’t want the project to ever come to an end.”

The balcony garden, opened by Dudley group NHS Foundation Trust chief executive Paula Clark, includes a green roof, rose arch and large plant troughs filled with plants and flowers. It has transformed a run-down patient centre, in Amblecote, by keen gardener Steve Saul.
Flowering trees are the stars of summertime

WHERE has summer gone? I am sure that I am not the only person asking that question after those blistering hot days that now seem like a memory of last summer rather than this one!

As we approach the longest day our gardens are running at full speed ahead and as well as the roses and herbaceous plants doing their stuff there are some superb flowering trees. You might not see them in every garden but if you have space they are worth seeking out or if you don’t have room then go and see them at a garden or arboretum while they last.

My premier choice of summer flowering tree is Magnolia obvata (syn hypolucida) which has clusters of white flowers in a large cupshaped arrangement. It is best planted where it can be admired close up or better still where you can look into the flowers. There are anumber of purple leaved cultivars which can be found up into the flowers. There are anumber of hardy annuals that are still flowering, but we need to remove faded flowers, helping the plants to produce a second flush of flowers later in the summer.

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Carer falsely claimed £15,000 in benefits

Mayor’s boost for charities

The two mayors and their wives with charity representatives after Councillor Waltho, centre left, raised a record £56,000 for his charities

Mayor’s boost for charities

There was an additional £3,500 for the Lupus Group raised by runners in the London Marathon. Councillor Steve Waltho, said: “My wife, Jayne, and I take great satisfaction that five wonderful charities are to substantially benefit. These organisations will in turn benefit many disadvantaged or poorly people. I would like to give huge thanks to our voluntary fund-raiser, Sue Randle, and to Sophie Byatt from Castle & Crystal Credit Union for managing our online donation account. I would also like to thank the mayoral support staff.”

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We obtained a favourable report from a surveyor to establish that the local authority were responsible for the repairs and simply before trial a settlement was reached with the local authority agreeing to complete the outstanding repairs, pay compensation to our client of £10,000 and agreeing to pay the client’s legal costs.

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“ I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for acting on my behalf and making what was a very difficult, stressful and emotionally tiring time a lot easier.

I am grateful to you that you took all the stress and restored everything out for me. Your faith, knowledge and determination were something that solves my worries. Once again, many thanks for your generous support. I am exceedingly grateful.”

Hodge Jones & Allen LLP, 180 North Gower Street, London NW1 2NB Authorised and regulated by the Solicitors Regulation Authority

www.hja.net
Going underground – to help RAF win the battle for the skies

IT was the cold nights that my grandmother most often recalled about her time working at Drakelow Tunnels.

Her day would start early at 5am, having to catch the train and bus to the underground military complex, before returning home late at night.

Florence Brassington was around 22 when she started working at Drakelow and was among hundreds of workers based there. The site, beneath the countryside near Kinver, was at the time top secret. Drakelow Tunnels were built in the 1940s by the Government and run by Rover to manufacture aircraft parts to supply Britain’s war effort during the Second World War.

It was spread across miles of tunnels deep underground countryside that is now Kingford Country Park, between Stourbridge and Kidderminster.

As it was so secretive, there were no photographs taken of Florence while she worked at the factory. My father, Paul Brassington, said: “It used to come as a shock to me when I would ask her, as a young lad, what she did in the war.”

“She said she used to work in an underground factory making aircraft components. I kept asking where it was and I asked her to show me one day when we went there. “She took me to the edge of some sandstone rocks, which were heavily overgrown, and she said this is the entrance where we all used to go in. It seemed hard to comprehend behind that entrance there was miles and miles of tunnels.”

“She used to recall starting really early in the day and had to walk along country lanes when it was pitch black. She longed for the nights when it was crisp and frosty. She said the sky would be really clear and you could see the stars twinkling and shooting stars flying across the sky.”

Her journey to work began by walking around a mile from her home in Laurel Road, Dudley, to Dudley Port railway station. From there she travelled to Kidderminster and caught a bus for the workers. “She would say the tunnels seemed to go on for ever. It was all brightly lit by fluorescent lamps which made it look like daylight inside.”

Engines

The construction of Drakelow Tunnels began in June 1941. It was initially planned to house a shadow company for the Rover car company in Birmingham, which at the time was manufacturing engines for Bristol Aeroplane Company, originally the British and Colonial Aeroplane Company.

The factory was called Drakelow Underground Dispersal Factory, and on completion covered around 250,000 sq ft, with tunnels that spanned for three-and-a-half miles. The complex was designed by Sir Alexander Gibb & Partners and was estimated to cost £285,000. However, that figure went on to exceed £1 million.

The factory went into full production in May 1943. Inside were dormitories, radio studios, workshops, offices, toilets, electrical equipment and a communications facility with telephones.

The manufacturing was split into two main areas, where the aircraft parts were made and then polished to high specifications.

“I asked mom, was it dull and tedious working there?” Paul recalled. “She said ‘yes’, but there was a war going on and it was part of the war effort for our country to survive. They supplied her with aprons, as she was a machinist, to stop the splashing of chemicals.”

Up to 700 people were said to work at the factory, mostly women as men were fighting in the war. They worked hours 10-hour shifts, starting at 7.30am.

Drakelow Tunnels were later converted into a Cold War nuclear bunker but were de-commissioned and sold by the Government in 1993.

Florence passed away in 2010, aged 89.
Solicitors forced to shut after 41 years

A FIRM of solicitors in Stourbridge has shut down after 41 years as its partners face a disciplinary tribunal over their involvement in a collapsed overseas investment scheme.

The partners at Sanders & Co, in Hagley Road, say they are “bitterly disappointed” but have been forced to stop trading because of a dispute with their professional indemnity insurers.

The firm shut up shop on Thursday after 41 years, and can no longer take any work or continue to act for clients.

It comes as four solicitors at the firm face prosecution before the Solicitors Disciplinary Tribunal.

Following a referral to the tribunal from the Solicitors Regulatory Authority earlier this year managing partner Clare Taman, Michael Davies, Charles Fraser-Macanamara and his daughter Katherine all face a five-day hearing in London in October.

Allegations

The SRA said the allegations are, as yet, unproven but the tribunal has certified that there is a case to answer.

The tribunal has the power to issue unlimited fines, suspend a solicitor or even strike them off.

The allegation is that the firm had acted for a client “in relation to a complex overseas investment scheme and concurrently for individuals who invested in the scheme, in a situation where there was a conflict, or significant risk of a conflict, in a situation where there was a conflict, or significant risk of a conflict of interest between the individual investor and the interests of the firm and an individual”.

It is understood the allegations surround involvement with the Knowle House Developments scheme to build social housing in Brazil, which collapsed in 2014 owing investors more than £20 million.

By Simon Penfold

Clare Taman and Michael Davies also face allegations that they involved themselves and the firm “in a complex overseas investment scheme that was outside the firm’s area of expertise and experience where there was no legitimate need for the involvement of a firm of solicitors and permitted payments into and transfers or withdrawals from the firm’s client account which were not related to an underlying legal transaction or a service forming part of their normal regulated activities.”

The SRA said the tribunal “will reach its own decision after considering all the evidence, including any evidence put forward by the solicitor”.

Sanders & Co says in a statement on its website that its closure “is directly attributable to a dispute with our professional indemnity insurers”.

Wills are being transferred to Cradley Heath lawyer George Green Solicitors for safekeeping. Deeds will be returned to clients “as soon as possible”.

In a statement the firm added: “The partners at Sanders & Co are bitterly disappointed at this turn of events but unfortunately do not have the resources to continue any further litigation with its insurers therefore the closure is unavoidable.

Choir’s £1k for centre

A PERFORMANCE by a choir in Stourbridge raised more than £1,000 for a centre that supports disabled children and their families.

The Stourbridge Rock Choir performed at Kids Orchard Centre in Lyne on June 10 as part of the centre’s summer fair.

The funds raised will go to helping the centre which provides support to disabled children, young people and their families across the Dudley borough.

Mural unveiled as part of chainmaker festival

HUNDREDS of people gathered in Cradley Heath to mark a landmark event in the history of equal rights.

The annual Chainmakers Festival took over High Street in the town on Saturday. It commemorated the 1910 Women Chainmakers’ Strike led by Labour MP Mary Macarthur and the women of Cradley Heath.

A mural that marks the landmark strike along with town’s significant buildings and personalities, painted by local artists Maren Lilley, was also unveiled beside the hypoman Bridge in Fox Oak Street Business Units as part of the event.

Market stalls, fairground rides, live music, dance and speeches took place.

Dudley Council’s cabinet member for environmental services, Councillor Hilary Bilsby said the event had been a fantastic celebration of what the strike achieved more than 100 years ago.

She said: “I’ve been involved with the festival since 2004 and it’s always good to re-enact the march the women did back in 1910.

“We’ve been in Cradley High for the past two years after having been in the Black Country Living Museum from 2006 to 2010. We’ve found our proper home now – the High Street is Cradley Heath where Mary Macarthur and the women actually made their stand.

“It is growing every year, especially since we took it back to Cradley Heath. I bumped into quite a few people who said ‘my grandmother or great-grandmother was a chainmaker’.

The strike was pivotal in labour history and development of the minimum wage.

By Simon Penfold

19 Dudley Chronicle Thursday, July 7, 2016

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Bosses call for swift action after Brexit

BLACK Country Chamber of Commerce has called for swift, decisive and co-ordinated action in the wake of Britain voting out of the European Union.

Dr Adam Marshall, acting director general of the chamber, said: “In the wake of the electorate’s historic decision to leave the European Union, the immediate priorities for UK business are market stability and political clarity.

“Some businesses will be pleased with the result and others resigned to it. Yet all companies will expect swift, decisive, and co-ordinated action from the Government and the Bank of England to stabilise markets following trading conditions, or the availability of capital, change dramatically.

“Business will also want to see a detailed plan to support the economy during the coming transition period – confidence, investment, hiring and growth would all be deeply affected by a prolonged period of uncertainty.

“If ever there was a time to ditch the straight-jacket of fiscal rules for investment in a better business infrastructure, this is it.”
GIFT out your Black Country flag to celebrate the best of the region, a packed programme of events have got under way to make everyone proud of their heritage.

With fairs to comedy nights, sporting events to historic tours, there’s a huge variety of events on offer this month.

Organisers Steve Edwards and James Stevens are once again be at the helm of this Black Country extravaganza, and highlight that there is plenty to celebrate about the region, while also having a good time.

James said: “The Black Country is all about community, pride and having fun. If people are the salt of the earth, we are full of pride for our historic region and the festival allows us all to come together showcase everything that is great about the Black Country.”

Industry
In particular he is keen to once again bring the focus on the vital role the region had, and still has, to industry in the UK and abroad.

“The Industrial Revolution made the Black Country what it is today. It was the engine room of the world, everything was either made here or invented here.”

“But there is a common misconception that industry in the Black Country is no more. So we need to once again shout about Black Country industry.

“I see so many business logos that incorporate the Black Country Flag and it is amazing. I saw a transport company the other day and the slogan was ‘You mess it, We fix it’ with The Black Country Flag logo above it.

“We have the best Real Ale breweries in the world, our manufacturing industries are growing and food production in the Black Country goes worldwide. We still make everything here, including the kitchen sink.”

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But there is a common misconception that industry in the Black Country is no more. So we need to once again shout about Black Country industry.

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New for 2016, Riviera has introduced Australia to their portfolio. Here, there are plenty of things to see and do including the chance to visit Ayers Rock, spend time in Melbourne, Sydney and Cairns, and enjoy a catamaran cruise to the Great Barrier Reef.

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Online: www.starreadertravel.com

Flying the flag for the Black Country

Proud Black Country man, Philip Tibbotts, of Halesowen, wearing Black Country Tartan, was a driving force behind the flag

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It was the engine room of the world, everything was either made here or invented here.
Huge range of activities to make festival best yet

The organisers of the Black Country Festival are keen to ensure the 2016 celebration surpasses the success of last year’s festival.

And that was quite a triumph with over 500 events.

Check out what’s happening, below, in our part of the Black Country including a day of family fun in Dudley town centre on July 16.

JULY 9: Noon to 4pm – Wordley Festival will be at King George V park.
JULY 9: Noon to 4pm – Gornal Fun day at the Recreation Ground in The Quarry Vale Street.
JULY 9: 8.30am to 4pm – The Black Country Faye organised by the Haloween and Rowley Regis Rotary Club takes place in Summers Square with great food, entertainment and stalls.
JULY 9: 9am to 5pm - Netherton Park Fun day.
JULY 9: 7.30pm - Black Country chamber choir ‘Colla Voce perform classical choral music with a professional chamber orchestra and baritone soloist at St Michael’s Church in Brierley Hill. Tickets £5 on the door.
JULY 9: 10.30am to 4pm – What’s at the Top? Community Open Event at Top Church, Dudley, to explore new options for St Thomas & St Luke’s. It will be a fun day for the family where you can meet a bird of prey and learn about craft skills.
JULY 10: 1pm to 5pm – Brockmoor and Pennsnett Black Country Fun Day at the Dell Stadium.
JULY 11: 10.30am or 1pm – Tour of the new White House Cone at the Museum of Glass, Wordsley. Booking essential. £5.50 per person.
JULY 11: Dudley Canal Trust celebrates Black Country Day with a 45 minute tunnel trips just 50p between 4pm to 7pm.
JULY 16: From 11am – thousands of people will be heading to Dudley for!
Making a statement with vintage additions

ANTIQ UES AND COLLECTIBLES

By John Ridgeway of Perry & Phillips

Janet models swimwear of the 60s

Seared hangar steak with frisée lettuce

Claus Meyer is now living in New York

FRESH from an appearance on Saturday Kitchen, Claus Meyer is in a sea-blue three-piece suit and has spent the morning chopping beetroot to make beetroot tartar with horseradish.

The restaurateur, businessman and chef is what you'd call supremely Nordic – from his no-nonsense attitude, to his chiselled, Viking cheekbones.

"It’s difficult to compare anything with Noma," he muses, "but it wasn’t my achievement alone. I had a very good chef in front and vice versa along the road in Rene [Redzepi], and he grew a lot through the project. He was an unknown chef when we started, now he’s the most known chef in the whole world." Noma sent Meyer stratospheric in the world of food, while driving the New Nordic Cuisine movement, and developing a manifesto for it in 2004 saw him define and bring them into a home cooking context.

"It’s one thing speaking about a project, manifesto for it in 2004 saw him define and bring them into a home cooking context.

When he first wrote The Nordic Kitchen, it was at a time where, he explains, having launched Noma and Nordic Cuisine, he “wanted to translate all the culinary ideas and bring them into a home cooking context”.

"It’s not only did we launch the Nordic Cuisine, he says proudly, “we also launched the concept of any region having the potential – not only the right – but also the possibility, to suddenly capture the moment.” However, Meyer’s personal ideas on food, and his recipes for home cooks, have only just become available in the UK.

When he first wrote The Nordic Kitchen, it was at a time where, he explains, having launched Noma and Nordic Cuisine, he “wanted to translate all the culinary ideas and bring them into a home cooking context.”

"It’s like training a racehorse: you’re in the training field for years, and you want that horse to run."

As you’d imagine, he goes very few days off, but when he does Meyer says, “I play tennis and do sport with my girls, I read a little bit, and I try and enjoy New York. But besides cooking, running this show, being there for the family, being present, whether that means making an ice-cream with the ice-cream machines, going for a walk with the dogs in the park, watching a nice film – in between those very, very down days, basic family things, like taking a long breakfast together on a Sunday morning, there is not much time."

"Having brunch is not a passion, but you have to have that in your life somewhere."
Kaisers’ music lessons
In the woods – Page 25

For full listings see Express & Star every Friday
Friday, 7.30pm
New Alexandra Theatre, B’ham
A musical play looking at the silent movie star’s life in the music hall and Hollywood with Bryan Hodgson as Chaplin (above) and Coronation Street’s Steven Arnold as his brother. Visit www.glee.co.uk/shows.

Thursday, 7.30pm
Donnyo Smond
Described as Simply The Best tribute to Tina Turner, Judie Reddoch (above as Tina) headlined last year’s Glastonbury Festival and now brings her Dynamix show to the Black Country. Visit www.therochin.co.uk.

Monday, 7pm
The Glee Club, B’ham
The 33-year-old X Factor 2010 winner from Southamptom is now a veteran of three albums, garnering fame as a songwriter as well as a singer. See www.glee.co.uk/venues/birmingham.

Listings for July 8-14

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**Dudley Chronicle Thursday, July 7, 2016**
Fans predict a musical riot when the Kaiser Chiefs, fronted by Ricky Wilson, play Cannock Chase on Sunday.

“If you go down to the woods this summer, you’re sure of a big surprise,” So says Kaiser Chiefs frontman Ricky Wilson as he plays at this weekend’s Forest Live concerts on Cannock Chase. “We’ve always loved to play outdoors. We’ve done fields, parks, farms, rooftops, beaches and back gardens, but this will be the first time we’ve played in a forest,” said the 38-year-old Keighley-born singer, who is the most successful judge on TV’s The Voice. Kaiser Chiefs are currently working on album number six, while new single Parachute is out on October 3.

Support for the KCs’ gig on Sunday comes from Vitamin and Spring King with the concert from 7pm being the last of three sold-out events in the forest this weekend.

Singer-songwriter James Bay is tomorrow night’s (Friday) headline act. Fans of the 2016 Brit Award Best Male Artist will be able to hear tracks from top-selling album Chaos and the Calm, including Hold Back The River. Support by the trio Joseph at 7.45pm.

Paul Heaton and Jacqui Abbott are Saturday’s main attraction with songs from second album Wisdom, Laughter and Lines, as well as favourites from The Beautiful South. Support comes from Devon Brothers (6.30pm) followed by Leisure Society.

Music fans will head to the Forest

The event is being sung in Italian.

It is being sung in Italian.

Verdi’s comic opera Falstaff. The concert in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, is on Wednesday, July 14, 15 and 16.

Performances embrace a range of dance styles from classical to hip hop via flamenco and jazz. It will include one-act ballets: Elite Syncopations by Kenneth MacMillan. For tickets visit birmingham-rep.co.uk or call 0121 236 4455.

Falstaff opera will end CBSO season

The City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra finishes its latest season with a performance of Verdi’s comic opera Falstaff.

The concert in Symphony Hall, Birmingham, is on Wednesday, July 13 at 7pm. Tickets are £21 to £48 for the concert in which the CBSO is joined by singer Ambrogio Maestri in the title role and the CBSO Chorus. It is being sung in Italian.

Meanwhile, the Music For Youth National Festival continues in and around the Symphony Hall. Hear music all day by brass and wind bands today (Thursday) and tomorrow, including Cannock Performing Arts Centre Wind Band on Friday.

Doreen has a Grand plan

BLACK Country comedy character Doreen Tipton is likely to give her thoughts on how to sort out Brexit Britain with her shows at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre on Wednesday and Thursday, July 13 and 14.

Following the EU Referendum, Doreen has broken into the world of politics with hilarious consequences via her own political broadcast, that has become an online hit.

As leader of the Yam Yam Party she has decided to stand up for the “little folk” now the “un-erected bureau rats” have left the Black Country “without a paddle”.

She talks about how the vote has hit the markets – mainly Bilton and Brierley Hill markets – and how it has changed young people ‘after a quarter of them got out of bed to vote’.

Doreen has three pledges – to provide a better pay rise to those paying taxes and get rid of immigration by building a wall around the Black Country to keep out the Brummies.

Following on from the success of Doreen: The Movie and now her own online TV channel – Doreen TV – the character, created by actress Gill Jordan and writer David Tristram, has been selling out venues from Bebawley to Bromley on her Grand Night Out tour.

With a mixture of satirical stand-up (or sit-down, when she feels a rest), music and video surprises, Doreen will assess the state of the nation as only she can. The show is recommended for over-15s and tickets cost from £11.50 to £16.50. See www.grandtheatre.co.uk or call the box office on 01902 429012.

Assessing state of the nation as only she can

Showcase stage for young dance talent

STUDENTS at the Elmhurst School of Dance, the associate ballet school to Birmingham Royal Ballet, will be performing a Summer show at Birmingham Rep on July 14, 15 and 16.

Performed in association with Birmingham Royal Ballet, Summer Synoposition will showcase the talents of students aged 11 to 19 years from the school in Edgbaston.

Performances embrace a range of dance styles from classical to hip hop via flamenco and jazz. It will include one-act ballets: Elite Synoposition by Kenneth MacMillan.

For tickets visit birmingham-rep.co.uk or call 0121 236 4455.

Scott tops bill at songwriter festival

SINGER-SONGWRITER Scott Matthews headlines a mini-festival in his home city on Saturday, at the Banstock Songwriter’s Garden party.

From 4 to 10pm Bantock Park, on Finchfield Road, Wolverhampton, will host an impressive line-up of talented musicians.

The event starts with Shar.NODE and continues with Gary O’Dea, Saltflat, Ryan Evans, Under A Banner, Alex Ohm, Terry & Gerry, with Matthews – who has released four studio albums — taking the stage at 9pm.

For tickets see www.wolverhampton.gov.uk or call 0870 320 7000.

£10 Match play for all slots with this voucher

Valid until 1st August 2016

£5.00 includes all bingo books from 6.30pm-9.30pm.

*Offer Saturday Evenings throughout July
finds his affair with Queen Anne his life, and sets out to warn his
the murderous Grimaud set in his hit-list. Meanwhile, Athos
Athos manages to escape with Pasqualino, Tamla Kari, Howard
The day of reckoning arrives for
the track in South Africa this week.

9.25 Casualty. Brian’s tray cigarette
7.40 The National Lottery: In It to Win
England Club.
6.00 Pointless Celebrities. Starring Hilary
real-life father and son Robin and Robert
organisation. Crime comedy, starring
12.30 Film: Inside Versailles. Felix
champion. Pearson discovers a printing press
King refuses to let Philippe help
Chaplin, Julian Rhind-Tutt, Michael
11.10 Film: Carry On Matron. (R)
6.00 Film: The Wipers Times. (R)
5.40 Film: The Long Voyage Home. (1940)
Queen, starring John Wayne.
3.00 Film: Call the Midwife. (R)
11.45 Film: The Goldbergs. (2013)
2.30 Film: Robot Chicken. (R)

Santiago Cabrera

The Muskeeters (BBC1, 8.30pm)
The day of reckoning arrives for the swashbuckling heroes, but the murdernous Grimaud set in motion a series of savage, co-
ordinated attacks designed to eliminate the Muskeeters for good. Despite receiving Grimaud’s direct attention, Athos manages to escape with his life, and sets out to warn his comrades they will be next on the hit list. Meanwhile, Athos finds his affair with Queen Anne in the forefront of his mind as he accompanies King Louis on an
11.40 Film: The Last Seabird Summer? A Hijacking (2012)
4.50 Film: Alien 3 (1992)
3.35 Film: Monster Carp (2015)
1.15 Film: The Tao of Steve (2009)
7.00 Film: The Hot Desk: Day of the Park 2016
2.45 Film: FYI Daily

26

To find out more about advertising in the Express & Star call 01902 31 31 31

SATURDAY’S TV JULY 9

BBC Four

11.00 Warner UK 12, Film: Baby Mama (2008) 1.50 Film: Scream Queen (1990)
6.00 Film: Being Good (1972)

9.00 Film: Skyscraper. (R)

2.50 Film: FYI

11.40 Film: The Longest Day (1962)
2.35 Film: The Secret of My Success.
1.15 Film: The Tao of Steve (2009)
7.00 Film: The Hot Desk: Day of the Park 2016
2.45 Film: FYI Daily

26

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**THE FASTTRACK**

**SUNDAY’S TV JULY 10**

**BBC One**

- **6.00** Breakfast: 5.00 The Andrew Marr Show
- **6.30 - 7.00** Sunday Morning Live
- **11.00** Regional Programme
- **12.30** The One Show
- **15.30** Countryfile

**BBC Two**

- **6.10** The Art of TV & Gardens: (R)
- **7.35** Gardeners’ World: (R)
- **8.45** Saturday Kitchen: (R)
- **9.45** Saturday Live: (R)
- **10.00** Countryfile: (R)

**BBC News**

- **1.10 - 1.15** World
- **1.10 - 1.15** World
- **1.10 - 1.15** World
- **1.10 - 1.15** World
- **1.10 - 1.15** World

**SUNDAY’S TV JULY 10**

**BBC Four**

- **7.00** Film: The Water Babies
- **8.45** The River: (R)
- **9.55** The River: (R)
- **10.15** Film: Weather Report
- **11.00** BBC News

**ITV**

- **6.00** ITV
- **7.30** Film: Flatliners
- **8.00** Regional Programme
- **9.00** Weather
- **9.30** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)

**ITV News**

- **7.00** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)
- **9.00** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)
- **9.30** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)
- **9.45** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)
- **9.55** Film: The Day of Reckoning (2012)

**ITV2**

- **5.00** Film: The River
- **5.25** Film: The River
- **5.45** Film: The River
- **6.00** Film: The River
- **6.05** Film: The River

**CHANGELINE 5**

- **5.00** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **5.10** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **5.20** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **5.30** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **5.40** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)

**CHANGELINE 4**

- **4.15** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **4.25** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **4.35** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **4.45** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)

**CHANGELINE 3**

- **3.15** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **3.25** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **3.35** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **3.45** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)

**CHANGELINE 2**

- **2.15** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **2.25** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **2.35** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **2.45** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)

**CHANGELINE 1**

- **1.15** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **1.25** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **1.35** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
- **1.45** Film: Puffin Rock: (R)
A new set of youngsters put themselves to the test

Three of TV’s hardest quiz shows – Only Connect, University Challenge and Mastermind – all return to BBC Two this week, to challenge an exciting new generation of contestants. Although some of us feel a little bit dim; (Although at least with Mastermind we can reassure ourselves that it’s nearly impossible to do well on someone else’s specialist subject). However, the show most likely to leave viewers feeling somewhat smug at the End of the Earth Sanctuary for Genius, which is back for a fourth series on Channel 4.

For newcomers, the programme sets out to find the cleverest eight to ten-year-olds, who are paired with a team of experts in an organisation associated with British UNESCO. It’s not just about the questions. The series also follows the kids and their families, offering an insight into what it’s like to be a gifted youngster and the different ways their parents have of dealing with the challenges involved. It also gives viewers an opportunity to weigh up the age-old question of whether their intellectual ability is at least partly down to parental encouragement.

However, what we do see of the competition can be tough, and in this first episode, the contestants will be facing the very demanding maths and memory rounds.

So perhaps it’s reassuring that this year the questions will be asked by someone with a bit more experience at putting nervous contestants at ease – Phillip Cuckor of Richard Osman. Although sadly on this show, no one can actually ‘answer Central African Republic’ and hope for the best. Osman is certainly the star of the programme, saying, “I jumped at the chance to work with a new guest on someone with an incredible record for the most questions.”

And we also get to meet Max, whose mum is very keen that the process will help him embrace his intellect. But given that the younger has ADHD, how will he respond to the competition?

Monday

Lost Letter Mysteries: The Impossible Dream, Channel 5, 3.15pm

Somebody is on the trail of the Miss Special Delivery contest Mystery drama, starring Eric Mabius, Kristin Booth and Crystal Lowe. (2015)

Wednesday

Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps, Channel 4, 1.35pm

Ruthless stockbroker Gordon Gekko is released from prison after eight years, reinventing himself as an author and lecturer warning against the dangers of the financial system. Gekko helps a young banker get revenge on the company that drove his mentor to suicide, but as always, has a crooked agenda of his own. Oliver Stone’s sequel to his 1980s drama, with Michael Douglas, Shia LaBeouf and Carey Mulligan. (2010)

New Zealand

Various dates in 2016/17

Price includes:
- Return flights with Singapore Airlines
- Two days stopping in Singapore on route
- 14 nights bed and breakfast accommodation including a stay on a farm
- Two evening meals and two packed lunches
- A visit to Waitangi Treaty Grounds, Te Puia Maori cultural area and Tamaori Maori Village
- Wine tasting in Marlborough
- Abel Tasman coastal cruise, Milford sound cruise and optional day trip to Milford Sound
- TransAlpine train ride and a scenic helicopter flight around Franz Josef Glacier
- Visit to Arrowtown and Milford Sound
- Single rooms subject to availability (supplement applies)

Organised by Riviera Travel (ABTA AB07744, ATOL 3430). Prices are per person unless otherwise stated. Please read brochure leaflet pages for full description plus terms and conditions. Please note that StarReader Travel are unable to take bookings.

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It’s a right Royal treat at the Oak where Zack aims to reign

I DIDN’T come here to be insulted, I thought, as the waiter beckoned me with a ‘Mongoose, sir!’ So where would I usually go, you may ask?

I jest of course. That was my drink of choice at the Royal Oak, in Rushall, a former pub which has a new lease of life as an Indian restaurant.

Zahirul Islam pulls the strings in the tight-knit family-run operation, which also features two of his brothers and a cousin. He jokes that he is known as Zack to customers, friends and even his close family, simply because people struggled to spell, or even pronounce his name.

And that in itself gives an indication of the staff’s attitude. They are a jocular crew, so it’s easy to strike up a rapport with them. We visited during Holy month, so while the staff were on a fast, the delivery of our food was speedy. Usually the chef would test the ingredients before serving up, but, being Ramadan, could not. Instead, he had to use all his expertise to know exactly the right blend for our meals. It worked a treat. For the record, I tried the masala tika, pink salmon, served with coconut rice. The other half took her choice from the signature dishes and opted for the Manchurian chicken – which sounds like something Noel Gallagher would choose – served with mushroom rice.

Other声to-sounding options from the same range include lamb balti pelli, mustard fish and jinga delight, but there’s an extensive menu, from a Royal mixed grill in the grilled section, to the more traditional choices or biryani dishes. Vegetarians are catered for with the likes of paneer biriali, while onomlette and chips and tandoori chicken feature among the English dishes. The Royal Oak serves up a wider range of drinks than one would usually find at a licensed Indian restaurant, hence my choice of Mongoose. Both agreed our meals were delicious, and I was served a trout as an extra. Something fishy there, methinks.

Essence

But that was not our only treat. Desserts followed, by which time our hosts could end their fast, so they offered us a serving of the platter they were to enjoy. It was too much, especially after pudding, but it needed no second invitation as they kindly packed it up so we could enjoy it the next day.

Zack has tried to keep the essence of the building since taking on the former pub just six months ago. It had been a popular establishment in its day and he was keen to bring it back into use. It’s welcoming and adequately decorated and ambiently lit.

It has a separate room where customers can go just for a drink, or wait for a table in the restaurant itself. The main dining area cater for up to 100 diners with an emphasis on families, though bigger parties and corporate events can be accommodated, too.

Our own position was in a prime location, in the far corner, looking out on adjacent field, watching people tend the horses or take them off for rides. Zack himself has taken the reins in his own field – and looks to be on to a winner.

The Royal Oak, Dow End, Rushall, is open on Sunday to Thursday from 5.30 to 11.30pm and on Friday and Saturday until 12.30am. Zack is even looking at introducing Sunday lunchtime dining and a Wednesday banquet evening. Call 01922 614947.

The former pub is now the popular Royal Oak Indian Restaurant

Spacious – inside the Royal Oak Indian Restaurant

Plenty of choice in seating, with family and more private areas

The well-stocked bar has a varied selection

London Theatre Breaks

Rail inclusive breaks – Two days
Saturday Night Theatre from £169.15

Catch the Theatre Express and enjoy a super two-day weekend break in the capital.

There’s a selection of London hotels to choose from (supplements may apply) and rail travel is standard class with the option to upgrade. Departs Saturday from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton, returning on the Sunday.

The ticket is for a Saturday evening performance.

Rail inclusive breaks – Three days
Theatre Showstopper from £239.15

This popular theatre package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday returning on Sunday.

Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade, plus two nights stay at a four-star London hotel (supplements may apply).

Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

Coach inclusive breaks – Two days
Saturday Night from £149.15

Theatre Weekend with Dinner from £159.15

For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option, see the mainline performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal. The Saturday Night option includes a ticket for the evening performance (meal not included).

Both breaks include a standard priced theatre ticket and the option to upgrade plus an overnight stay in a four-star outer London hotel.

London is the natural home of theatre and the musical is king in the capital’s world-famous West End. British musicals that prove a runaway success here, often go on to triumph on Broadway and around the globe. The winning combination of engaging writing, captivating stage design and commanding performance has enabled London theatres to achieve box office smashes time and time again.

Omega Holidays offer a superb portfolio of theatre breaks, managing the whole show package which includes travel, either by coach or rail, four-star accommodation and various price bands for each show. Make your own way breaks are also available to book.
Stunning family home close to delightful walks

Surrounded by beautiful open countryside, Swindon Cottage, High Street, Swindon, is a stunning substantial period detached family home close to delightful canal side walks.

Having incredibly deceptive accommodation, it is for sale through Taylors at £340,000.

The very spacious layout includes a beautifully re-fitted luxury breakfast/kitchen through conservatory, two large separate reception rooms, four excellent bedrooms, including the master with an impressive en-suite bathroom.

The property is set back beyond the broad front driveway leading to the large garage and to the rear a private and attractively landscaped cottage style garden is to be enjoyed. With gas central heating and double glazing it has a 20ft long reception hall with a light-wood style floor and a door to the garage and a door to the conservatory.

The luxury re-fitted kitchen/through conservatory is beautifully fitted with a superb range of pastel 'sage green' kitchen furniture. It includes a Belfast-style sink with period style mixer tap with solid wood butchers block work tops either side with cupboard/storage space and drawers below, an integrated double oven, integrated microwave, wall units, a tall larder style unit with integrated carousel storage and adjacent recess for fridge/freezer with wine rack above.

The peninsular unit opposite includes twin touch control electric hobs integrated into the 'Corian' work surface with large 'pan' drawers and cupboard/storage space below plus a stainless steel illuminated cooker hood above and breakfast bar. Within the conservatory area of the kitchen is space for breakfast table/chairs. French doors open to the rear garden and there is an 'old school' style radiator, contemporary style radiator, a further tall larder unit and tiled floor.

The utility/launder room has complementary units/ work surfaces and an integrated washing machine and dishwasher.

There is also a guest WC, a formal dining room with oak flooring and a log burner, a large front sitting room with a log burner style fire and oak flooring.

KEY FEATURES
- In the heart of the village
- Stunning period home
- Detached
- Canal side walks
- Beautiful re-fitted kitchen

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- Solid marketing advice to help you sell fast

If you are thinking of selling, look no further than the estate agents in these pages for the best local advice available.
LOWER GORNAL, The Straits, Shakespeare Road

Spacious, freehold, gas centrally heated (combi boiler) & majority UPVC double glazed detached bungalow within reasonable walking distance of so many day-to-day amenities briefly comprising: porch, central reception hall, cloaks, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, lounge, breakfast kitchen, pantry, store, through lobby. Brick garage (automated door), secluded rear garden. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £215,000

LOWER GORNAL, Sandstone Close

SCANDANAVIAN STYLE. Gas centrally heated, double glazed detached family home constructed to first quality specification & in exemplary order. Designed to match adjacent property with minimal energy/running costs the accommodation includes; hall, cloakroom, lounge, 19ft ‘hub of the house’ dining kitchen, garden room. THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, garden, GARAGE (rear), additional parking. EPC: C. SEDGLEY

Offers in the Region of £185,000

SEDGLEY, Queens Road

An attractive SIGNIFICANTLY EXTENDED gas centrally heated UPVC double glazed semi detached of character with TREMENDOUS POTENTIAL within walking distance of Sedgley’s Bull Ring/open fields/other amenities. Accommodation provides porch, reception hall, sitting room, extended lounge, extended kitchen, THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom, garage, lengthily sheltered rear garden. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £180,000

OLDURY, Wentworth Drive

This MOST APPEALING & RATHER CHARMING, DETACHED HOME has UPVC DOUBLE GLAZED LAYOUT which comprises: Porch, Hall, Guests W.C, Lounge with Dining Area, Kitchen, THREE BEDROOMS, Bathroom, Attractive Front & Rear Gardens, Driveway, Garage. EPC

£169,950

WOMBOURNE, Gardeners Way

An IMPRESSIVE 2 BEDROOM SEMI DETACHED BUNGALOW which enjoys a superb open front outlook with an ESTABLISHED & PRIVATE REAR GARDEN, offering a BEAUTIFULLY PRESENTED and WELL APPOINTED layout with FRONT/SIDE DRIVEWAY. EPC D

Offers in the Region Of £169,950

DUDLEY, Himley Road

ENLARGED, modernised, gas centrally heated & UPVC double glazed semi detached comprising: entrance porch, reception hall, dining room with bay, 17’ lounge, breakfast kitchen; THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom. Lengthy garden, panoramic views, and CAR PORT together with ADDITIONAL PARKING at rear. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the Region Of £164,950

WOODSETTON, Rosemary Crescent

COMPREHENSIVELY MODERNISED TO AN EXCEPTIONALLY HIGH SPECIFICATION! Extended, gas centrally heated, double glazed semi detached with porch, hall, store, lounge, utility room, cloakroom, dining kitchen. THREE BEDROOMS, bathroom. Potential off road parking, landscaped rear garden. EPC: D. SEDGLEY

Offers in the region of £150,000

Lower Gornal, Straits, Milton Crescent

A semi detached for improvement occupying a fine corner plot within walking distance of so many day-to-day amenities in well regarded district. Offering tremendous potential the accommodation includes hall, through living room (formally separate rooms), kitchen, verandah, three bedrooms, bathroom, garage, garden (in need of attention). EPC Rating TBC. SEDGLEY

Offers in the Region of £161,950

SEDGLEY, Dormston Drive

IS THIS THE CHEAPEST DETACHED IN SEDGLEY? Most conveniently situated in a “backwater” within walking distance of the Bull Ring; a Freehold, gas radiator centrally heated, and UPVC double glazed detached comprising: entrance hallway, cloaks, 24’5” through living/dining room, kitchen. THREE BEDROOMS (all with fitted wardrobes), bathroom. Extensive block paving, secluded “low maintenance” rear garden. EPC Rating: D

Offers around £154,950

www.taylors-estateagents.co.uk
SEDGLEY, Northway, Alder Coppice
ENVIABLY SITUATED upon fine corner plot in favoured location; a magnificent, spacious, particularly stylish, gas centrally heated, UPVC double glazed detached family residence. Three bedrooms, well proportioned lounge, transverse dining room, fitted kitchen, utility room, WC, further store, large master bedroom with feature fireplace, en-suite, dressing room and fitted wardrobes, further bedroom, modern decorated lounge, separate WC, front and rear gardens. EPC: T.B.A.
Offers in the region of £75,000

DUDLEY, Vaushall Gardens
Imposing freestanding gas centrally heated either UPVC or aluminium double glazed detached built to a first class specification in the 1990's and conscientiously maintained over the years. Three bedrooms, fitted kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, main bathroom, separate shower room, sitting room, spacious entrance hall, large conservatory, garage, delightful external tended garden. EPC: TBC.

SEDGLEY, Algar Groane', Off Dudley Road
SHOW HOME NOW OPEN FOR VIEWINGS BY APPOINTMENT. With construction now nearing completion for August and just 5 plots available for sale, an exciting new development of gas centrally heated, UPVC double glazed detached homes. Standing next to the popular St. James Park, the plots have gardens, drive, garage and good access to Bull Ring & all associated amenities. Three designs available with prices from £128,500 - £127,500 - Further details with Agents Sedgeley Office: T.B.A.

Kingswinford, Westcott Close
An IMPRESSIVE & SUBSTANTIAL DETACHED FAMILY HOME, with fantastic views, offering a GENEROUS, CONVENTIONAL, BEAUTIFULLY PRESENTED & WELL APPOINTED layout, including a Conservatory and Four Bedrooms with En suite Shower Room. With SOLAR PANELS, BROAD DRIVEWAY, DOUBLE GARAGE and a beautifully established rear garden. EPC: D
Offers in the region of £220,000

COSELEY, Amril Crescent
An attractive gas centrally heated and UPVC double glazed THREE BEDROOM semi detached entirely situated upon corner plot overlooking open back space and open views beyond. The accommodation includes entrance hall, staircase, lounge, dining room, fitted kitchen, utility, WC, two double bedrooms, family bathroom, garage, driveway and garden. EPC: D
Offer in the region of £145,000

SEDGLEY, Gibbons Hill Road
BEAUTIFULLY DECENTRALISED, TWO BEDROOM, PERIOD STYLE, BASEMENT HOUSE, with UPVC double glazed sash windows, timber doors, Beech timber flooring, fireplace surround and feature fire. Two DOUBLE First Floor Bedrooms, White Suite Bathroom & Pleasant Rear Garden. EPC: C
Offer in the region of £134,950

UPPER GORNAL, Vauxhall Gardens
SHOW HOME NOW OPEN FOR VIEWINGS BY APPOINTMENT. With construction now nearing completion for August and just 5 plots available for sale, an exciting new development of gas centrally heated, UPVC double glazed detached homes. Standing next to the popular St. James Park, the plots have gardens, drive, garage and good access to Bull Ring & all associated amenities. Three designs available with prices from £128,500 - £127,500 - Further details with Agents Sedgeley Office: T.B.A.

SEDGLEY, Northway, Alder Coppice
ENVIABLY SITUATED upon fine corner plot in favoured location; a magnificent, spacious, particularly stylish, gas centrally heated, UPVC double glazed detached family residence. Three bedrooms, well proportioned lounge, transverse dining room, fitted kitchen, utility room, WC, further store, large master bedroom with feature fireplace, en-suite, dressing room and fitted wardrobes, further bedroom, modern decorated lounge, separate WC, front and rear gardens. EPC: T.B.A.
Offers in the region of £75,000

DUDLEY, Vaushall Gardens
Imposing freestanding gas centrally heated either UPVC or aluminium double glazed detached built to a first class specification in the 1990's and conscientiously maintained over the years. Three bedrooms, fitted kitchen, utility room, cloakroom, main bathroom, separate shower room, sitting room, spacious entrance hall, large conservatory, garage, delightful external tended garden. EPC: TBC.

SEDGLEY, Algar Groane', Off Dudley Road
SHOW HOME NOW OPEN FOR VIEWINGS BY APPOINTMENT. With construction now nearing completion for August and just 5 plots available for sale, an exciting new development of gas centrally heated, UPVC double glazed detached homes. Standing next to the popular St. James Park, the plots have gardens, drive, garage and good access to Bull Ring & all associated amenities. Three designs available with prices from £128,500 - £127,500 - Further details with Agents Sedgeley Office: T.B.A.

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SEDGLEY, Gibbons Hill Road
BEAUTIFULLY DECENTRALISED, TWO BEDROOM, PERIOD STYLE, BASEMENT HOUSE, with UPVC double glazed sash windows, timber doors, Beech timber flooring, fireplace surround and feature fire. Two DOUBLE First Floor Bedrooms, White Suite Bathroom & Pleasant Rear Garden. EPC: C
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Self-contained annexe at this detached property

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A unique, highly individual and spacious detached property in Wilton Close, Sedgley, comes with a self contained granny annexe.

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The annexe has an entrance vestibule, living/dining room, a inner hallway, a kitchen, a double bedroom with a shower room en suite.

The property has gas central heating and double glazing.

Contact Taylors on 01902 880888 or visit www.taylors-estateagents.co.uk
By Ian Donaldson

IN the world of cars everyone’s looking to smaller engines. Yes, you’ve guessed why, they use less fuel, or they ought to.

In the world of light commercial vehicles Volkswagen has decided to do things differently. Its latest Amarok pick-up, due here before the end of the year, has an engine half as big again as the unit in the truck you can buy today.

Out go the current 2.0 litre, four cylinder diesel with 140 or 180 horsepower and in comes a 3.0 litre powerplant with six cylinders (borrowed from some Audis) and with enough performance to make it the GTI of truckland.

And the reason for this surprising move to more cylinders and more co2?

Buyers of the first Amaroks were happy to pay more for what they saw as a premium product (which it was), but reckoned that should mean more power than was available from a mere 2.0 litres.

Then, by the end of this year, the old, smaller engine would need to be expensively upgraded anyway, to meet tougher new Euro 6 pollution limits.

The official fuel consumption test all new vehicles have to take reckons the bigger-engined Amarok will manage 37.2mpg and nip under 200g/km of tailpipe emissions (just, at 199g/km). That is actually a bit thirstier than before but a little less polluting.

Those are figures for the beefiest of three engines that will eventually power this heavily revised four door load lugger. This 204 horsepower V6 TDI is coming first and takes the Amarok to 120mph and from zero to 62mph in a spirited 7.9 seconds.

Some time in 2017 the Hanover-built Amarok will be joined by engines with 163 and 204 horsepower and, presumably, better economy figures and a lower price tag – the precise sizes of which will not be revealed until nearer the launch date. Current prices start at £25,419 and expect a gentle uplift.

I’ll think the new model will sell to the same sort of person, attracted by something that is both technically advanced and tough with a solid helping of comfort thrown in.

Minor changes to the outside include new bumpers and radiator grille and a new emphasis on horizontal lines that make an already wide machine look wider still.

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If you’re on the lookout for a used car Halesowen Autos really does take a lot of beating when it comes to value and quality.

The team behind this highly successful and friendly business has recently purchased the Cross Street showroom demonstrating their confidence in the local used car market.

Paul Wilkinson says: “Over the last six years of trading, our sales continue to rise largely through repeat business, and we have new customers arriving through word of mouth recommendations all the time.

We’ve wanted to buy our site for quite some time and we’re now delighted to own the showroom from which we operate.

“We are looking to expand our showroom space which will enable us to offer a larger selection of Prestige vehicles at affordable prices. We’re here to stay to provide our customers with more choices and we’re always competitive with regards to pricing. Based half a mile from Halesowen town centre, Halesowen Autos offers an enticing choice of hand-picked quality used cars from a wide variety of manufacturers.

The aim has always been to offer the lowest price but best quality used cars available locally.

A comprehensive warranty comes with most vehicles and independent inspections are always welcome. With HPI vehicle history and VOSA checks having been performed, every car is prepared to superb standard.

Cars are chosen for their overall quality, and the team’s wealth of motor industry experience ensures that only the best cars are selected for stock. At Halesowen Autos, part exchange deals are welcome and competitive finance plans are available on most cars, subject to status.

The dealership is open on most days for viewing and test drives,* and you’ll never be under any obligation to purchase after taking a test drive*. Visit www.halesowenautos.co.uk to see the cars online.

*Terms and conditions apply on test drives.

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expressandstar.com/drivetime
Citygo real pleaser for the driver and pocket

By John Griffiths

Yorkshire has some fantastic scenery and, luckily for the motoring enthusiast, it’s criss-crossed by some pretty amazing, bendy roads.

So, even when you’re driving what is clearly designated a city car these open roads are actually the perfect place to put it through its paces.

This was the latest, and easily the prettiest, version of the Skoda Citygo, and even though it is kitted out with the latest technology such as touchscreen and satnav, this actually seemed a bit of a drive down memory lane for me.

It took me back more than 40 years to the quieter roads of rural Shropshire and the sheer delight of driving a classic Mini.

Outright performance just isn’t an issue as you tackle bend after bend, reveling in the pin sharp steering, excellent agility and wheel at each cornerstability of the small but perfectly formed car.

All good features around town, of course, where the excellent all-round visibility (and lack of big overhangs to catch the unwary) makes it a breeze to manoeuvre and park.

Citygo isn’t new, of course, and mechanically it’s virtually identical to its VW Group city slicker sibling, the Up! And the Seat Mii.

But my ride for a couple of hours was a new special edition, the Citygo Monte Carlo, named in honour of Skoda’s sporting heritage including its win in the famous rally in 1936, which first spawned the badge on the company’s Popular sporting heritage including its winnt he famous rally in 1936, the Citygo Monte Carlo, named in honour of Skoda’s

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As for Citygo, it’s already proved it’s practicality and appeal to the heads of buyers with a City Car of the Year title. The Monte Carlo is an appeal to the heart, with extra, eye-catching red and black colour scheme (inside and out), sports styling, and extra equipment.

As a means of attracting young buyers, it’s a shrewd one: for under £11,000 it’s affordable, economy is over 50mpg, tax liability is low and, best of all, there’s an impressively low group two insurance rating.

It comes with front and rear spoilers, a rear diffuser and lowered suspension which not only turn the standard Citygo into eye-candy, it also helps to give the Monte Carlo its excellent handling characteristics. It also comes with 15-inch alloy wheel, fog lights, and sunset glass.

Inside the red and black theme continues with a sports steering wheel with red stitching, glass black dash inserts, special badging and bespoke, sports-style seats and comprehensive satnav, trip computer and infotainment system.

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  - This popular package to the West End departs from Birmingham New Street, Shrewsbury, Stafford or Wolverhampton on the Friday returning on Sunday. Standard class travel is included with the option to upgrade, plus two nights stay at a four-star London hotel (supplements may apply). Includes a top priced ticket for a Friday evening performance.

- **Coach inclusive breaks – Two days**
  - Saturday Night from £149
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  - Both breaks include a standard priced theatre ticket (option to upgrade) and an overnight stay in an outer London hotel. For the Theatre Weekend with Dinner option see the matinee performance before heading to the hotel for an evening meal, whereas the Saturday Night option is for the evening performance (meal not included).

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**Buy Local, Sell Local**
MORE than 1,400 youngsters from across the region joined forces for a festival of sport at the Black Country School Games in Walsall.

A host of different sports were on offer for the primary and secondary school pupils, who all came through qualifying stages to reach the final showcase.

The Black Country School Games was being held for the seventh time and saw 9,000 children participate this year alone.

The event has grown at such a rapid rate over its short existence that the 2016 finals – which were held at the University of Wolverhampton’s Walsall campus – welcomed their 10,000th competitor.

Blackwood Primary’s Paris Ebba was awarded a unique trophy by a special guest, Wolverhampton’s double Paralympic athlete Darren Harris, to mark the milestone.

Joel Rich

At the end of it all, the green shirts of Sandwell lifted the trophy.

Black Country BeActive director Paul Wicker, one of the organisers from Walsall Council, said: “It’s sport for young people, delivered by young people, and we’re looking for ways to get more children active in sport.”

He added: “The idea is to create a mini-Olympics for the Black Country, and to have an opening ceremony it adds to it and makes it different for them.”

The first Games were held in 2010 at Wolverhampton’s Aldersley Leisure Village. BeActive director Simon Hall has seen first-hand how the Black Country School Games have grown in stature.

“We’re not looking for the most elite athletes in schools, we’re looking for ways to get more children active in sport,” he said. “The Black Country Games gives young people a chance to experience that sort of multi-event experience, not quite the Olympics, but something they can really treasure.

“What’s been really special is being able to identify the pupil who was the 10,000th competitor, which is a huge achievement.

“The Games are all about young people setting out what they want to achieve in school sports in the region.”

A former ambassador for the Games was Joel Richards, who was tragically killed in Tunisia while on a family holiday just over a year ago.

Joel attended Stuart Bathurst Catholic School in Walsall. He was the 10,000th competitor, which is something they can really treasure.

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Show goes on with town hall fight bill

TYSON Fury versus Wladimir Klitschko may be due to take place in around 12 months’ time, but for local government officials the wait will be a bit shorter.

The ‘Summer Screamer’, promoted by Eddie Hearn, will be at Walsall Town Hall on Friday, July 29, at 7.30pm.

A two-round, middleweight clash will be the first on a bill that also includes three British title bouts.

For tickets and more information visit www.wombourne-windows.co.uk

‘No strings’ introductory sessions

A BADMINTON club is looking to get adults with little or no experience into the game.

Hagley, Clent and Kinver Badminton Club have been playing competitively in Hagley and Stourbridge for many years and have previously tried to attract new members who can play to a proficient level.

Now, the beginners’ session has been launched with sessions run an hour before the main club night on Fridays from 7-8pm at Hagley Catholic School. "They have now been running for four weeks and are going strong, said club secretary Keith Price.

He said: “The launch event was well attended with players learning the backhand serve before moving on to playing doubles matches. The average of players spanned the decades from teens to 20s and all appeared to have an enjoyable time.

“The event is not aimed at generating profit but will have to prove to be self-funding”

Coach Hattie Alford said: “It is all about getting people active in an friendly supportive environment. Social badminton is just as important to the long term growth of the game.”

For further details, call Keith Price on 07815 650718 or email kpprolet@gmail.com

Badminton

THE West Midlands’ only American football academy is aiming to make a real difference to the lives of young people in the area.

The Black Country Academy of American Football, based at Ellowes Hall Sports College in Dudley, has launched youth and junior sides ahead of joining the British American Football League next year.

The teams are aimed at youngsters aged 14 to 19, and then up to 19, with around 40 aspiring players already taking part in training twice a week.

Academy CEO Stuart Potts-Perrin has been involved with the sport in this country for three decades.

He said: “One thing the game has always suffered from is senior focus.

“We thought we needed to start at a younger age, to get them involved and to try and get the sport to where it should be.”

Progression

The academy is looking to cater for all ability levels, and even for those who may not wish to continue playing when they reach senior level.

“That is all about progression for the youngsters, giving them a platform,” said Potts-Perrin.

The Vipers youth and junior sides will play the contact sport but flag football, a variation of the game similar to tag rugby, to be provided in the future for children as young as seven.

Summer training is on Wednesdays from 7.30 to 9pm and Sundays from 10.30am to 12.30pm. Winter sessions are on Sundays only.

“We have got the two sides at the moment and we will enter the league next year,” Potts-Perrin said. “There are about 40 players at the moment, all aged 14 to 19, but in the long-term we’re aiming to extend the age range from seven to 19.

“We have got six or seven coaches at the moment, but we’re looking to double that. We want at least 12 coaches here by this time next year, but the thing is, there are not many coaches in the country.”

Members of the Black Country Vipers Academy, based at Ellowes Hall Sports College, Dudley

DUDLEY Kingswinford Running Club boasted a bumper turnout for the Baggidge 5k, with Simon Blizzard first home for the blue loops in seventh place in 21.07.

Among the other entrants, Richard Bate made his long awaited return to racing, coming home in 21.53 to take 13th.

Sally McConville ran a little further on Saturday taking part in the Eardisley Trail Half Marathon finishing the 13.1 mile course over hilly terrain in 2:27:35. Meanwhile a group were completing lap after lap at Wolverhampton’s Aldersley Stadium in the charity Best Foot Forward event where local businesses and patrons had donated money to a pot which would be released to charities based on the number of laps completed.

With each circuit representing £1 the further people ran the more money was donated. In all over 12,000 laps were completed with DK runners responsible for a fair proportion over the 12 hour event, with Graham Wildgoose completing 82 laps. Mark Judge and 100 and James Wright managing 500 laps, equal to 50 miles.

There was also the option of the Birmingham: Black Country Half Marathon between Wolverhampton and Birmingham, the point-to-point course following the canal network and finishing at Bridgemere. Sam Hemmings completed her fourth race in eight days as part of the DK contingent.

On Sunday, a handful of runners competed in the Black Country 10k, a two lap race around the centre of Hagley and Kinver. Among the DK runners, Dave Norman claimed his third top 20 finish of the week and Helen Toman finished as second lady to claim a cash prize.

Play-off bid is boosted by away win

CRADLEY boss Will Pottinger described Saturday night’s win over Rye House as a turning point as they secured their first away league points of the season to book their play-off place.

Said Pottinger: “It was a great team performance but with no disrespect to Rye House, this was a track we always felt confident of getting a result at.”

Four new recruits for the Glassboys

STOURBRIDGE have completed the signing of four new players ahead of their first pre-season friendly away at Leamington on Saturday (3pm).

Joe Duggan, Jake Heath and Luke Bencho, who spent three seasons with the Bears before leaving at the end of last season, are back at Stourbridge and Aaron Daniels, the new arrival, while Danny Hole has re-signed.

Sam Whitall, who signed from Brack- ley Town at the end of last season, but experienced striker Karl Hawley has joined League Two Mansfield Town as first team coach.

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