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ISSUE 110

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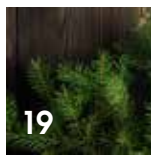


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## ISSUE 110

### SALES

Heather Digby  
Sarah Deakin

### DESIGN

Liona Baldwin

### ACCOUNTS

Jan Evans

**01283 564608**

[local@locallinksmedia.co.uk](mailto:local@locallinksmedia.co.uk)

Local Links Media  
Suite 29

Anglesey Business Park  
Anglesey Road  
Burton-On-Trent  
DE14 3NT

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### CONTRIBUTORS

Including:

Angela Sargent, Perry Deakin,  
Alan Parsons, There's A Bear  
For That, Deb Walker

Dear Readers,

*The clocks have turned and the evenings are now decidedly dark and wintry. We've even had some frosts! It's about now when we start thinking of lighting fires, switching to the winter duvet (if you haven't already!) and planning for Christmas! Yikes! The C word!*

*We've got a fab 'how to' for making flavoured vodkas! That should get you in festive spirits! If you're a real tree kind of family, we've got the guide to trees that will help you choose your perfect tree this year.*

*If you just can't bear the thought just yet, we've got a fab article by Alan Parsons, our very own Monty Don, with some things you should be doing in the garden in the coming weeks. So get out there and enjoy those autumn leaves!*

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# Getting Merry

**W**ith Halloween now out of the way, we're starting to look forward to Christmas. If you fancy giving your festivities a personal twist, why not have a go at making your own flavoured vodka. Get started now and you will have fabulously delicious tipples to drink or give away as gifts to friends and family!

## Ingredients:

2 cups chopped fruit, a single fruit or a mix of fruits

2 to 3 cups vodka

Optional extras: citrus peels, minced ginger, fresh herbs, split vanilla beans, whole cloves, whole star anise, whole cinnamon sticks, peppercorns, and other whole spices.

## Equipment:

Chopping board

Knife

1 litre jar or other container with lid

Strainer

Cheesecloth (optional)

Measuring cup

Large jug

Funnel (optional)

Glass or plastic bottles

## Instructions:

Wash and pat the fruit dry. Chop the fruit into small pieces, trimming away any stems, cores, seeds, or blemishes. Peels can be left on or peeled off. Keeping skins on gives a stronger flavour and colour, cutting them off gives a sweeter, purer fruit flavour. Berries and other very small fruits can be left whole.

Transfer all the fruit to the jar, along with any extra herbs or spices you'd like to use. Pour any juice from the cutting board into the jar. If you're using berries, squash them with a wooden spoon to break them up and release their juices.

Pour the vodka over the fruit. Use enough to completely cover the fruit and fill the jar, about 2 to 3 cups. Seal the jar tightly and put it somewhere out of direct sunlight.

Shake the jar of fruit and vodka daily. You'll see the vodka gradually take on the colour of the fruit. Taste it after 3 days and continue infusing to

your liking. Most fruit vodkas are finished in 3 to 5 days, but you can continue infusing the vodka for longer.

When the vodka has been infused, separate the fruit and the vodka by straining it into a jug. If your fruit had a lot of seeds or sediment, line the strainer with cheesecloth before straining. Discard the fruit after straining.

Pour the vodka into clean bottles, a funnel helps with this step. The bottles don't necessarily need to be completely filled, but they do need to be able to be sealed or the vodka will evaporate. Store the vodka out of direct sunlight; it will keep indefinitely.

**Sweet fruit liqueur:** To make a sweet liqueur, similar to limoncello, mix the strained vodka to taste with simple syrup (equal parts water and sugar, simmered until sugar is dissolved).



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# By The Barn *by Angela Sargent*



**T**he days are dramatically curtailed now (or so it seems to me) and the urge to cut working hours shorter and draw close to the fireside is much stronger. However, it's a busy month, as livestock are inside, or due to come in soon and those that are out need feeding if grass has run short and those that are in already need caring for.

On blue sky days the cattle, housed in the modern style

sheds, sunbathe contentedly, chewing their cud and the air is fresh, as the sheds are well ventilated. We shut them back, for safety, with metal gates, when we are scraping out and bedding. It is so much easier to use machinery to speed up the process and bigger farms will have feeder wagons and, maybe straw choppers that chop and blow the straw to the back of the pens.

Old, traditional buildings can be dark and confined- not so airy and not quite so safe for mucking out etc, but they have their place in the countryside. Brick barns and sheds often have cosy crevices and nooks and crannies where bats and owls can roost and shelter from the cold.

Our woods have been spectacular with the colours of the turning leaves, banks of which collect in the corners of the yards, where they have been blown with the gales. With tugging well underway now, we just have to move sheep around so that they have enough to eat. This gives Ted plenty of exercise and plenty of work- collies need to keep their brains and bodies active! His colleague Pip, unless on a lead, does her utmost to thwart him at every opportunity and is getting very adept at avoiding capture.

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# Ashes To Ashes *by Perry Deakin*

So we are almost there! The Ashes Series 2017 kicks off on November 23rd in Brisbane and concludes, five Test Matches later in Sydney on January 8th. Hopefully by then England will have retained the Ashes (having won them in 2015) and most importantly taken the lead in Ashes history, winning their 33rd series to Australia's 32 (now tied at 32 each).

This is one of sport's most enduring battles with the first Test series played between the two old rivals in the 1876-77 season – 'The Ashes' originated from the solitary Test which the two nations contested in 1882. The term originated in a satirical obituary published in a British newspaper, *The Sporting Times*, immediately after Australia's 1882 victory at The Oval, Australia's first Test win on English soil. The obituary stated that English cricket had died, and "the body will be cremated and the ashes taken to Australia". The mythical ashes immediately became associated with the 1882-83 series played in Australia, before which the English captain Ivo Bligh had vowed to "regain those ashes". The English media therefore dubbed the tour 'the quest to regain the Ashes'.

After England had won two of the three Tests on the tour, a small urn was presented to Bligh by a group of Melbourne women, the contents of the urn are reputed to be the ashes of a wooden bail, and

were humorously described as "the ashes of Australian cricket". And so the legend of this biennial battle was born and the countries have been contesting the urn ever since – each year, pressure and media saturation seems to intensify so prepare for your newspapers and television to be filled with stories, rumours, scandals and 'Aussie Insults' until battle is done!

On-field 'sledging' (in-game verbal insults thrown at one another) between the two sets of players is just as legendary and will attract as much media interest as the games themselves as both sides attempt to gain a psychological upper hand – Most sledges are not suitable for print, but with a little 're-wording' there are certainly a couple worth re-living...

As England's future captain, Andrew Strauss was heading out to the wicket to bat in Melbourne, Aussie spinner Shane Warne told him he had been 'waiting 2 years for another chance to humiliate him' –

Strauss replied..... "Looks like you spent it eating,"

And my personal favourite took place in Sydney between England all-rounder Ian Botham and Australia's abrasive batsman Rod Marsh – as Botham was waiting to be bowled at in the middle, Marsh strode over and asked Englands hero -: "So, how's your wife & my kids?"

Ian Botham's response?..... "The wife is fine but the kids are retarded"

Yes, battle is sure to be intense, fraught, edgy and will include several spats and rows between the 'Kissing-Cousins'

England captain Joe Root will no-doubt be receiving special attention following his fight with Aussie batsman David Warner last time out, in the Walkabout Bar in Birmingham – but Root will no doubt cope and hopefully lead England to a historic win.

Let battle commence!





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VIKING

# Christmas Is Coming! *by Deb Walker*

Christmas is coming!' at 'the gallery @Ridware Arts' opens on Saturday 18th November for the busy run up to Christmas. Open all year round, Thursday to Saturday 10am – 4pm, please telephone on other days, because if we're in, we're open! This exhibition runs until Friday 22nd December, so why not indulge yourself and make shopping for gifts a pleasure? The gallery is the working studio of Deborah Walker RI, ARSMA, an elected member of the Royal Institute of Painters in Water Colours and an Associate of the Royal Society of Marine Artists. Deb will be painting in the gallery as usual in the run up to Christmas which offers an oasis of calm

at this busy time of year. Why not avoid the hassle of city shopping and visit her at 'the gallery' instead?

This year's 'Christmas is coming!' exhibition features new work by Deb and some of the gallery's favourite artists. We have a wide selection of paintings, including a range of mounted, tiny, original watercolours which would make an ideal special and unique gift; alongside original prints, ceramics, sculpture, jewellery and glass. Our Christmas Spice, Apple & Cinnamon and Nordic Forest scented candles will surely put you in the mood for the Festive Season!

For information about workshops for 2018 with Deb, please telephone 01889 504102, email Deb, or drop in to view the exhibition and pick up a programme. Be assured of a warm welcome this Christmas!

For further information about the forthcoming exhibition 'Christmas is coming!' please contact Deb at 'the gallery' on T: 01889 504102 or E: [deb@walker-art.co.uk](mailto:deb@walker-art.co.uk)

On the A515 from Kings Bromley to Yoxall, turn left at the roundabout to Hamstall Ridware and continue to turn or bear left to Blythe House Farm.

## the gallery@Ridware Arts

Blythe House Farm, Hamstall Ridware, Staffordshire, WS15 3QQ

T : 01889 504102

E: [deb@walker-art.co.uk](mailto:deb@walker-art.co.uk)

W: [www.walker-art.co.uk](http://www.walker-art.co.uk)



### Christmas is coming!

a Festive selection of new work by some of our favourite artists

**Saturday 18th November – Friday 22nd December**

Gallery open Thursday – Saturday, 10am – 4pm

(at other times please call 01889 504102 - if we're in, we're open!)

On the A515 from Kings Bromley to Yoxall, turn left at the roundabout to Hamstall Ridware. Continue to turn or bear left at every opportunity leading to Ridware Arts at Blythe House Farm.





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# TOP

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# Festive Firs

**I**t's getting to that time of year when we climb into the attic or the back of the garage to retrieve the tinsel. If you like a real tree and are weighing up when to buy, here are some types of trees to consider and what they're good at!

## Douglas Fir

The Douglas fir has soft, dark green or blue green needles. The tree is popular for its good needle retention and a lovely citrus fragrance. Lighter in weight than other varieties, it can be easier to transport home and manipulate in a stand.

## Fraser Fir

This tree has pair of silvery stripes on the underside of each needle. Frasers have sturdy, upturned branches that are ideal for showcasing ornaments; they also retain their needles better than other varieties. Not dissimilar in shape to the Norway spruce, it also has a more narrow base - making it ideal for tight spaces.

## Blue Spruce

The needles of this tree have a lovely silver-blue colour, though they are rather prickly. The tree holds its needles well and they generally have a good symmetrical form.

## Scots Pine

With long, flexible needles, ranging from bright green to blueish, this pine has a soft, fluffy look. Scots pines have firm branches and dense foliage and a lovely fragrance; they are best paired with bold ornaments that won't get lost in the boughs. The needles are quite sharp however needle retention is excellent as they don't fall, even when dry.

## Norway Spruce

Traditional prickly needled tree from our childhoods and popular since Victorian Times. The bright green Norway Spruce has a lovely scent but quickly drops its dense, spiky needles, so if you're keen on this variety, wait until later in December and make sure you water it regularly.

## Serbian Spruce

Similar to the Norway spruce, but with an attractive blue underside to the needles. These trees are quite slender, so are suited to smaller homes. They're very popular in central Europe.

## Nordman Fir

Increasingly popular in Britain, the Nordman fir is now Britain's biggest selling Christmas tree. It's slightly more expensive than a Norway spruce and has little fragrance however, it crucially retains its needles for longer. The trees, which were originally found in south Russia, have a reliably symmetrical shape and dark green broad needles. The foliage is soft and glossy, which make it child-friendly.

Whichever tree you choose, you may need to remove some branches to fit it in the corner of your room, if this is the case, why not save them and make a wreath for your door, arrange them over your mantle or tie them to the bannister.



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Bambinos also buy your old baby equipment for cash & offer a cleaning service if your baby goods just need a good clean. They really are your one stop, local baby shop & customer service is their top priority.

To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is put your name, address and daytime telephone contact number in an email and send it to:  
**local@locallinksmedia.co.uk**

Alternatively, you can pop your details on a postcard

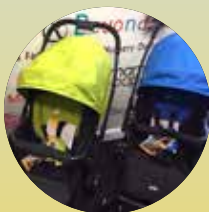
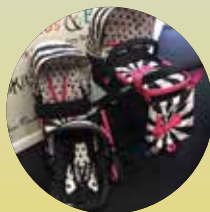
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**Local Links  
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Competition  
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The closing date for entries is the 13th of December, and the winners will be announced in our January edition.

Good luck to everyone who enters!

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# Photographic Fantastic *by Alan Parsons*



**D**o you want to get the most from your photography? Photography has never been as popular or as cheap to enjoy as it is now. Whether we use a mobile phone or a top end camera we can all enjoy taking photos to create images to record the sights that please us, and as they are all digital images whether we take one or a hundred it will cost the same. However if you would like to take your photography up to the next level you should consider visiting your local camera club. You will find that the techniques and skills you will learn will really open up a whole new world of creativity and let you see the world around you in a different way.

If you would like to see what can be done then Burton Photographic Society, which opened in 1933, is having its annual exhibition on November 18th and 19th at the Priory Centre in Stretton. Entry is free and there will be a tea and coffee bar operating all day. So come along and see what can be done. Hopefully you will be inspired!



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# What's On Guide

## TUESDAY 21ST NOVEMBER

### Art Classes

Weekly classes at The Horseshoe, Tatenhill following a programme of skills development with a focus on drawing and observation, then we will be drawing with colour and using water colour paints and mixed media. Lessons will cost £10, or £8 if paid a half-term in advance. Please email or phone for further details or to reserve your place. Contact: Helen Tarr Tel: 07791 228 881

## WEDNESDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

### Priory Art Group

We are a small friendly group of artists meeting at the Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton, every Wednesday morning, 9.30 to 12. New members are always welcome, whatever your level of experience, so why not come and have a chat to see what we have to offer. Contact: Sandra: 01283 329743

## THURSDAY 23RD NOVEMBER

### Dementia Walking for Health

Every Thursday, meeting at 10:45am at Oaklands village in Swadlincote for an 11am start. All participants must be accompanied by a carer/dementia friend on this walk. For more information on any of our Health Walks call Judi Whileman on 01283 563483

## FRIDAY 24TH NOVEMBER

### Alrewas Bridge Club

Meets at 2pm each Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at the Royal British Legion Club. All welcome. Contact: David Hall Tel: 01283 792 464

### Latin in Line dancing class

Enjoy all the popular latin dances - cha-cha, salsa, mambo, rumba etc. NO PARTNERS REQUIRED! Friday 17th, 24th November and 8th, 15th, 22nd December. 10.30am-11.30am £4.00. At the Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton DE13 0HE. Ring Lorraine on 01332 518161 for more details.

## SATURDAY 25TH NOVEMBER

### Calligraphy Workshop

Learn a new creative and fun skill by creating prints without presses. During this day course you will create hand pulled original prints by using woodcuts and lino to take away. Explore the method of chine colle (Chinese Collage) with linocuts and woodcuts. For beginners or artists who wish to try a new technique, this form of printmaking provides a hassle free and adaptable skill. To book your place and for further information, contact [mercianscribes@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:mercianscribes@yahoo.co.uk). Contact: Secretary Tel: 07790 435283

### Fradley Christmas Fayre

In aid of St Stephens Church Fradley 1-4pm at Fradley Village Hall, Church Lane WS13 8NL. Stalls, refreshments, games, Santa in his grotto, Grand Draw and much more. Free admission. Contact: Gill Tel: 07484326336

## SUNDAY 26TH NOVEMBER

### Learn to Ballroom Dance in a Day

After a busy summer of dancing, Ryknild Rabble start our autumn practices and welcome all to come along and 'give it a go'. FREE and there's no obligation. We have over 20 years experience of teaching people to dance. At King's Bromley Village Hall, Alrewas Road. DE13 7HW. From 11 am to 1 pm any Sunday. To find out more call Nigel Moss: 01283 790088

### Kate Dimbleby presents Songbirds

Described as having a voice of pure velvet and a magnetic stage presence, Kate has released six albums, sold out London's Festival Hall and appears regularly on national radio. The daughter of broadcaster David, Kate has created her own route to success. This is a unique opportunity to see her at Alrewas Village Hall, courtesy of Live & Local which exists to bring quality entertainment to village venues. Doors 7.15pm. Tickets £9.50 from Lorna Lewis on 01283 790799 or Alrewas Pharmacy. Contact: Sue Williams Tel: 01283 790270

## MONDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

### Red & Ginger's Lindy Hop Dance Class

Monday nights during term time 8-9pm. Learn to Lindy hop, Charleston and swing dance to the best vintage music at Tutbury Castle! Our relaxed, friendly and welcoming lessons are suitable for all ages and abilities, for those with a partner or without. You'll get fit and socialise, as well as get access to a range of vintage events throughout the year. Monday nights, 8-9pm term time at Tutbury Castle. [www.dancewithredandginger.com](http://www.dancewithredandginger.com) Contact: Red & Ginger by email at [hello@dancewithredandginger.com](mailto:hello@dancewithredandginger.com)

## TUESDAY 28TH NOVEMBER

### Burton Dance & Social Club

We invite and welcome anyone over 18 years of age. We meet every Tuesday Evening 8-11pm at Marstons Sports and Social Club, Shobnall Road, Burton-on-Trent. Activities include sequence, ballroom and line dancing to professional live music, bingo, raffles and food nights. Come along and join us and meet new friends. For more information contact Pauline: 01283 519159

## WEDNESDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

### Priory Art Group

We are a small friendly group of artists meeting at the Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton, every Wednesday morning, 9.30 to 12 noon. New members are always welcome, whatever your level of experience, so why not come and have a chat to see what we have to offer. Contact Sandra: 01283 329743

## THURSDAY 30TH NOVEMBER

### Zumba Gold Dance Fitness

A class for mature adults and those that are new to exercise. Anslow Village Hall from 11.30am. For more information call Pat Miller: 07973 478444

## FRIDAY 1ST DECEMBER

### Art & Craft Drop In

Every Friday during term time only. Clays Lane Sports Pavilion. 10 to 12 noon. Admission £1.

### Rolleston Advent Festival

Rolleston on Dove, St Mary's church 12th Advent Festival "A Taste of Christmas" From Friday 1st to Monday 4th December 1-6pm daily. Church decorated with trees and garlands, craft stall, & refreshments in Old Grammar School room. Suggested donation £2 in aid of church funds. Further information if required from 01283 813320

### Beatus Choral Concert

7.30pm in conjunction with Advent Festival, Tickets £7.50 (to include light refreshments) from choir members and by phone 01283 813320.

### All Saints Christmas Tree Festival

All Saints Church, Alrewas from Friday 1st to Sunday 3rd December. Special preview evening Friday from 7pm with a Coates butchers hog roast, mulled wine and mince pies. Entry only by pre-paid £10 ticket. For Tickets call 01283 790281 or 791153 or email [johnnallan@revdjohnnallan.plus.com](mailto:johnnallan@revdjohnnallan.plus.com)

## SATURDAY 2ND DECEMBER

### Disco & Street Dance Classes

Fun classes and expert tuition for 3 - 8 years in Branston Village Hall every Saturday. Call Pat Miller for more information: 07973 478444

## SUNDAY 3RD DECEMBER

### Burton Ramblers

Walks most Saturdays, Sundays and every other Wednesday. All walkers welcome to join this friendly local group, walking in Staffs, Derbys and Leics. Please visit our website for more information. [www.burtonramblers.org.uk](http://www.burtonramblers.org.uk) Contact: Burton Ramblers Tel: 07724 352529

# Find more events on our website

## MONDAY 4TH DECEMBER

### Watercolour Painting for Beginners

At Tutbury Village Hall, every Monday morning during term times, 10am - 12noon. For further information or to reserve a place, please contact Ann Stringer-Paget on 07816 118776 anytime. Admission is by prior registration only.

## TUESDAY 5TH DECEMBER

### Burton Hospitals Friends Bingo

First Tuesday of every month. £1.00 admission this includes refreshments at half time. Raffle and Tombola available to add to the fun of the evening. All proceeds are directed to Queens Hospital to provide the extras for patients and staff. Contact: Julie Hammond Tel: 0757126935

## WEDNESDAY 6TH DECEMBER

### Burton Abbey WI

Meeting at the Brewhouse on the first Wednesday of the month at 10am to 12 noon. Good Speakers, refreshments, also days out organised. New members welcome. For more information contact Pauline Gaskin 01283 565620

### Barton-Under-Needwood WI

1st Wednesday of every month at St James Church Hall. Meeting 7.30-9.30 with good speakers, refreshments and fun. Organised events and trips throughout the year. New members and visitors always welcome.

## THURSDAY 7TH DECEMBER

### Burton Friendship Club

Meets the 1st Thursday in every month 10am for 10.30am in the Rolleston Club. Join us for speakers, quizzes, games, lunches, coffee mornings, day trips and holidays. Phone Stuart and Penny 01283-716626

### Friendship Circle

Meets at 7.30 pm on the first and third Thursday of every month in the schoolroom at the rear of Stretton Methodist Church. We meet for activities, speakers, trips and friendship. All are most welcome. For further information contact Iris on 01283 546909.

## FRIDAY 8TH DECEMBER

### Family History Club

The Club meets on the 2nd Friday of the month in Room 2 at the Burton on Trent Library from 10 am till 12 noon. You may be completely new to exploring your family history or you may have many years of experience - you will be equally welcome. We have speakers on a wide variety of subjects relating to family history.

### Unwind Yoga Class

A gentle, restorative class for all abilities that will stretch out your tension and find stillness within. Using guided meditations and relaxing yoga Nidra, this class will help you float your way home to peaceful night's sleep. 6.45pm - 7.45pm at The Well House, Burton. Call: 01283 529486 for more info.

### Repton Village Christmas Tree Festival

Friday 8th to Sunday 10th December at St Wystan's Church, Repton. £2.50 adults. Children free. Short Pot Pourri of entertainment followed by mulled wine and mince pies. Live music on Saturday & Sunday afternoon. Children's Christmas Story at 4.00pm on Saturday and Sunday. Bell ringing on Sunday afternoon. Refreshments and Craft Stall

## SATURDAY 9TH DECEMBER

### Mince Pie & Mulled Wine Walk

Come and be merry! Enjoy a bracing walk around the Centre, finished off with a warming drink and a mince pie. Meet at 1:45pm for 2pm start in Rosliston Forestry Centre Foyer. 2 miles, no stiles. Price £3.50 (includes mince pie and hot drink). For more information call 01283 563483.

### Rolleston Scouts Christmas Bingo

Christmas bingo at Rolleston Scouts, Station Road, Rolleston on Dove. Doors open 6pm Eyes down 6.30. Refreshments available, please note there is no bar, but feel free to bring your own. Lots of prizes to be won. Contact: Karen Wagstaff Tel: 07976 461872

### Derbyshire Constabulary Choir

Derbyshire Constabulary Male Voice Choir in concert at 7.30pm, at the Priory Centre, Stretton. This event is to raise funds for the CHICKS Christmas Appeal, a wonderful charity which organises holidays in the countryside for disadvantaged children. There is no licensed bar, so bring your own drinks. Tickets are £10 available from Diane Buxton, 32 Derwent Road, Burton-on-Trent, DE15 9FR. Contact: Diane Buxton Tel: 01283 532411

## SUNDAY 10TH DECEMBER

### Christmas Music by Candlelight

Start your preparations for Christmas with the Needwood Singers' annual concert of Christmas music in the candle-lit Alrewas Methodist Church, Staffordshire, DE13 7BS at 6pm. New and old carols to listen to and to sing, tea, coffee and mince pies to refresh you at the interval. Tickets £8 (under 16s free) from Sheila, any member of the choir or on the door. Contact: Sheila Goodwin Tel: 01283 716790

## MONDAY 11TH DECEMBER

### Disco & Street Dance Classes

Fun classes and expert tuition for 8 to 12 year olds in Burton every Monday. Call Pat Miller for more information: 07973 478444

## TUESDAY 12TH DECEMBER

### Burton U3A

An organisation with over 30 interest groups catering for retired and semi retired people who wish to keep their minds and body's active. The groups cover a wide range of activities from Spanish - Bridge, Digital Photography - Gardening, to name just a few. We meet at The Dial for coffee in the morning of the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month.

## THURSDAY 14TH DECEMBER

### Burton Belles Women's Institute

From 7.15pm-9.30pm. We meet at the St Chads Centre DE14 2SS on the 2nd Thursday of the month. First timers can visit for free and then you can decide whether to pay £4 a month or £41 a year. The October meeting is a Craft Workshop. There will also be refreshments and a raffle. Come along, make new friends, try something new and have fun. Contact: Wendy Plant Tel: 07772548230

## COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to our **Boar's Head** competition winners, each winning £50 Voucher:

**Helen Faulkner, Branston**  
**Emma Revell, Burton-on-Trent**  
**Helen Handy, Alrewas**

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## LAST MONTH'S SUDOKU PUZZLE SOLUTION

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1	9	8	4	3	6	7	5	2
2	7	6	1	5	9	8	3	4
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9	6	5	3	1	7	4	2	8
7	3	4	5	2	8	1	9	6

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# Autumn In The Garden by Alan Parsons

For me one of the pleasures of gardening is experiencing the changes in the seasons through the changes in the garden. The trees are now turning orange and brown ready to drop their leaves but there is still plenty of colour in the garden and there are crops on the allotment to be harvested. The dahlias continue to put on a good show, we have only just cut down our sweet peas, and the Spanish Flag (Mena Lobata) is still growing on the trellis.

## ***On the allotment...***

Get picking leaks and beetroot, swiss chard and raspberries, spinach and kale. With the autumn days getting shorter, and the temperatures starting to drop, we now need to turn our minds to getting the garden or allotment ready for winter.

## ***Get clearing...***

Sometime in November the first frosts will probably finish off any plants that are not hardy, so clear away any that are going to be hit anyway before they get to that stage. Cut back dahlias at the beginning of November to just above the

ground and either provide a mulch to protect them, or dig them up and let them dry before storing in vermiculite in a frost proof area. Any annual plants grown in pots need to be cut down and the pots emptied and washed out ready for use next year, this will help kill off any bugs or viruses that could affect next year's plants. I still need to keep on top of the weeds as they will keep growing and many are hardy, so unaffected by frost. A few hours clearing weeds now will be well spent, and pay dividends, giving you a clear start for next year.

## ***Prepare for next year's planting...***

But it is not all about closing everything down or walking away and leaving it, there is still plenty to be done. It is not too late to take cuttings from your favourite plants which if kept in a frost-free area, and not watered too much, will give you loads of colour next year. November is the month to plant soft fruits such as currants and gooseberries. Garlic and autumn onion sets planted now will provide a good early

crop, and if you have rhubarb it can be divided to increase the number of crowns. I have just been sowing broad beans in individual pots in my sunhouse for planting out once they are about 150mm high.

## ***Look after your little garden helpers...***

If you are fortunate enough to have hedgehogs visiting your garden or allotment you will know how good they are, together with toads, at getting rid of slugs. Hedgehogs will soon be looking to over winter so you might consider building a hedgehog home in a sheltered place somewhere where they can come and go easily. There are "How to" guides on the internet that cover this, and how to encourage toads and useful insects, helping to produce healthy crops and flowers, fruit and vegetables over the next season.

Happy digging! If you're Looking for an Allotment? phone Alan Parsons on 07777 653667 or email [secretary@strettonallotments.co.uk](mailto:secretary@strettonallotments.co.uk).



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# Presents of Mind

Christmas can be an expensive time of year and thinking of what to give to your nearest and dearest every year can become a struggle. It's disheartening to both give and receive gifts that fall short of the mark, making us feel ungrateful or as if we've wasted money. Always a tough one. Here are a few tips to help you make sure your gifts hit the mark!

## Keep it current!...

Do you have up-to-date knowledge of your nearest and dearest's interests? What we absolutely LOVED ten years ago may not now be the case. Crazy for cats, or couldn't get enough about books on wizards and elves, often tastes change and even though we'll

probably always love those kitties, we possibly don't want to adorn our house with little effigies of them. Make an effort to ask friends and family who see the person regularly to gauge their most recent likes and interests. Why not pay a visit and have a subtle scan around their home to give you an idea of things that would fit in with their home or lifestyle.

## Make it simple!...

Homemade is not always a great idea. Unless you're accomplished at making something, you'll possibly fret about producing a gift to a good enough standard and try something too ambitious. Let's face it, the run up to Christmas is stressful enough! Last thing you need is to spend the dark

evenings the week before Christmas gluing yourself and pricking your fingers in a furious effort to get things done. If you want to make something the key is to keep it simple like seasonal biscuits, after-dinner peppermint cremes, bath bombs, knitted scarves or why not have a go at our flavoured vodkas on pg.7!

## Spend wisely!...

Buying expensive gifts in a panic is never a good idea. You'll feel the pinch after Christmas and it doesn't necessarily mean that your recipient will be proportionally impressed. An expensive gift that's 'off the mark' is just as disappointing as something cheaper that's equally 'off the mark'. Be sure to spend carefully. If the person that you're buying for has expensive tastes, then sometimes there's no getting around it, so why not buy expensive chocolates or a nice wine which will be easier on your pocket if that's what your recipient likes. Even a single expensive nail-varnish or other cosmetic can impress and be thoughtful without being too extravagant. If everyone did the same, we would have a lot of luxury treats that we actually like rather than a huge pile of things that have fallen far from the mark.





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					9		1	
6					3		7	9
1	4			6				
8	5	1	4					
		6		7		9		
					6	2	5	1
				5			6	7
5	6		2					8
	3		6					

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