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ISSUE 134

FREE

**PANTO**

It's not behind you!

**WHAT THE DICKENS!**

How Charles Dickens shaped Christmas

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# LOCAL LINKS



## ISSUE 134

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Including:  
Angela Sargent, Deb Walker,

Dear Readers,

*Oh my goodness, are you panicking yet? It's the middle of November and the festive season is looming. Feels like we were only here a few months ago, isn't it terrifying how quickly the year has flown?*

*On a more cheerful note, it's the season when we have lots to look forward to! If you haven't been to one in a while, why not get into the spirit early and go to a Pantomime? Cheesy? Possibly, but sometimes we need to learn to take life not so seriously! Even if you haven't got kids let your hair down and get a bit silly. Read about the history of Panto in this issue!*

*We've also included a great recipe for Vegan Christmas Pudding for you to try this year. It's guaranteed to be something everyone will enjoy.*

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# Panto: It's Not Behind You...

**I**t's the time of year when many of us start thinking ahead and planning for Christmas. One of those time honoured traditions of the festive season is the Christmas Pantomime! Ever wondered when the Pantomime tradition started?

The word pantomime was adopted from the Latin word *pantomimus*, which is derived from the Greek words “panto” meaning “all”, and “mimos”, meaning a dancer who acted all the roles or all the story.

Traditionally Pantomimes is a type of musical comedy stage production designed for family entertainment. It was developed in England and is performed throughout the United Kingdom, Ireland and (to a lesser extent) in other English-speaking countries, especially during the Christmas and New Year season. Modern pantomime includes songs, gags, slapstick comedy and dancing. It employs gender-crossing actors and combines topical humour with a story more or less based on a well-known fairy tale, fable or folk tale. Pantomime is a participatory form of theatre, in which the audience is expected to sing along with certain parts of the music and shout out phrases to the performers.

In the Middle Ages, the “Mummers Play” was a traditional English folk play, based loosely on the Saint George and the Dragon legend, usually performed during Christmas gatherings, which contained the origin of many of the archetypal elements of the pantomime, such as stage fights, coarse humour and fantastic creatures, gender role reversal, and good defeating evil. It developed partly from the 16th century *commedia dell'arte* tradition of troupes of travelling entertainers performing comedic moral tales around Italy and other European and British stage traditions, such as 17th-century masques and music hall.

Some of the most popular pantomime stories include Cinderella, Aladdin, Dick Whittington and His Cat and Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, as well as Jack and the Beanstalk, Peter Pan, Puss in Boots, Sleeping Beauty, and Mother Goose. Classic conventions of the Pantomime include:

- The leading male juvenile character (the principal boy) is traditionally played

by a young woman in male garments (such as breeches).

- An older woman (the pantomime dame – often the hero's mother) is usually played by a man in drag.

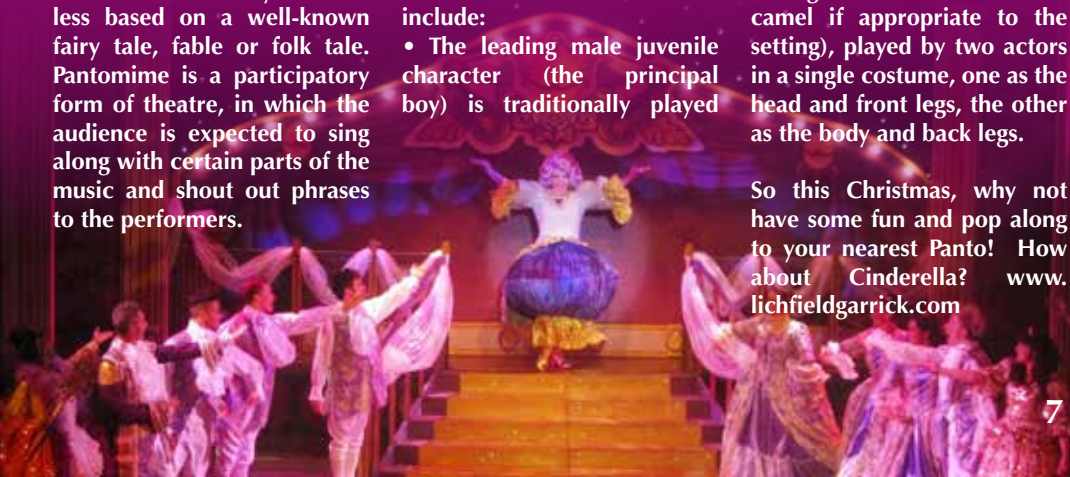
- *Risqué double entendre*, often wringing innuendo out of perfectly innocent phrases. This is, in theory, over the heads of the children in the audience and is for the entertainment of the adults.

- Audience participation, including calls of “He's behind you!” and “Oh, yes it is!” and “Oh, no it isn't!” The audience is always encouraged to hiss the villain and “awwwwww” the poor victims, such as the rejected dame, who is usually enamoured with one of the male characters.

- Music may be original but is more likely to combine well-known tunes with re-written lyrics. At least one “audience participation” song is traditional: one half of the audience may be challenged to sing “their” chorus louder than the other half.

- The animal is often a pantomime horse or cow (though could even be a camel if appropriate to the setting), played by two actors in a single costume, one as the head and front legs, the other as the body and back legs.

So this Christmas, why not have some fun and pop along to your nearest Panto! How about Cinderella? [www.lichfieldgarrick.com](http://www.lichfieldgarrick.com)



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# A Little Something for Everyone

A little something for everyone' at 'the gallery @ Ridware Arts' opens on Saturday 16 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 Saturday 21 December, so why not indulge yourself and make shopping for gifts a pleasure?

This exhibition showcases, for the first time, over 'One hundred new small mounted paintings for one hundred pounds and under!' by resident artist Deborah Walker RI RSMA; a range of mounted, original watercolour, ink and mixed media paintings

which would make an ideal, special and unique gift. From local landscapes, seascapes, abstracted fragments and woodlands, to detailed studies of found objects and Venetian vistas, we hope to have 'a little something for everyone'. The mounted paintings will be shown alongside an exhibition of Deb's seascapes from around Britain's dramatic and yet beautiful coast, framed work of all sizes, from tiny to huge! With a range of ceramics from Australia, jewellery by local designer Lynn Kendall and glass from France, our Christmas Spice and Apple & Cinnamon scented candles, from 'On a Wick and a Prayer' in Derbyshire, will surely put you in the mood for the Festive Season!

For information about painting workshops for 2020 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 'A little something for everyone', please contact Deb at 'the gallery' on T: 01889 504102 or E: [deb@walker-art.co.uk](mailto:deb@walker-art.co.uk)

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Follow Angela on Twitter @bythebarn.

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# Festive Vegan Treat

When family get together it can be difficult to cater to everyone's dietary needs. Why not try this Vegan Christmas Pudding. Everyone is guaranteed to be happy!

## INGREDIENTS:

260g dried fruit  
10 dried dates or figs  
10 dried apricots  
80mls brandy, or port, dark rum, a good sherry or a nice dark stout.  
50g plain flour  
65g dried out bread crumbs  
2 tsp baking powder  
1 tsp allspice  
80g dark brown sugar  
1 medium apple, grated  
1 large orange, zest only  
3 tablespoons aquafaba, this is the liquid from a can of chickpeas  
2 tbsp molasses  
75g coconut oil

## YOU WILL ALSO NEED:

1 litre/2 pint pudding basin  
baking parchment  
tin foil  
some string  
scissors

## INSTRUCTIONS:

Put the dried fruit, including the dates or figs and apricots, into a large mixing bowl and pour over the brandy (or alternative alcohol). Leave until the liquid has been absorbed by the fruit. How long it takes varies depending on the fruit you use but it will be somewhere between about 15 and 30 minutes.

While that is happening, place

the pudding basin on some parchment paper and draw a circle around the bottom of the basin onto the paper. Cut it out and set aside. Then turn the basin over and draw another circle around the top of the basin. Cut that one out but cut a few millimeters inside the line this time so the circle will fit on top of the pudding mix when you put it in the basin. Set that circle aside too.

Place a heatproof saucer upsidedown or something similar in the bottom of a large saucepan so the pudding doesn't come into direct contact with the heat when it goes in, and a full kettle boiled and ready.

Grease the pudding basin with some coconut oil and place the small circle in the bottom of the basin.

Once the liquid has been absorbed by the fruit, add the flour, breadcrumbs, baking powder, allspice and sugar to the bowl and stir really well to combine.

Then add the orange zest, apple, aquafaba, blackstrap molasses and coconut oil and stir well until combined.

Spoon the mixture into the pudding basin, smooth it out and top with the large circle of parchment paper, pressing it down all over and into the sides gently.

Cut a large rectangle of silver foil and a slightly smaller rectangle of

parchment paper. Enough to go over the top of the pudding basin with plenty to spare. Then lay the foil flat on your surface and the parchment paper flat on top of the foil. Make a pleat in them both to allow steam to expand them as it cooks.

Cover the top of the pudding basin with the foil and paper making sure the pleat is in the middle, then press it down all around the basin as tightly as you can, then tie twice around the basin with string as tightly as you can.

Place the pudding gently on the upturned saucer inside the pan and pour boiling water carefully down the sides so it reaches about halfway up the side of the pudding basin. It must not reach the foil.

Bring to a simmer but don't let it rolling boil as you don't want the water to get up under the foil. Cook for 3 hours, checking periodically and carefully topping up with boiling water as necessary.



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# Forever Family

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### 3. I can't adopt because I'm gay.

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*Hannah Jones*

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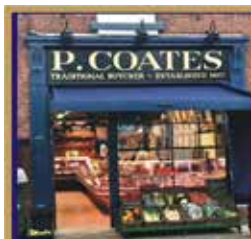
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Many of us are quite vigilant regarding the obvious fire hazards around the home, but are you aware of some of the more hidden hazards? Here are some sneaky threats that might have been slipping under your radar!

Dryer fires start when built-up lint near the motor, gas burners or heating elements catches on fire.

Your home's chimney should be swept at least once a year to remove soot and debris such as bird nests which could become a fire hazard.

Don't keep batteries loose in a junk drawer, especially 9-volt batteries. It's possible that the metal in the junk drawer could short out a 9-volt battery and spark a fire.

Fishbowls, jam jars, magnifying make-up & shaving mirrors and glass door knobs have helped cause home fires in the past. If they stand in direct sunlight and if the angle is just right, the rays from the sun can become concentrated enough to begin combustion.

With cigarettes already the single biggest cause of fire deaths in the UK, a recent

Legal cigarettes have fire-retardant paper at intervals down the length of the cigarette so that, once lit, it will self-extinguish if not actively smoked. This reduces the fire risk from them being left burning in an ashtray, dropped, or from the smoker falling asleep, for example.

For more information on fire prevention visit: **[www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/toolbox/fire.htm)**



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# WIN!

## A Switch Off Spa Day for Two!

For this month's competition, a lucky reader can win a SWITCH OFF SPA DAY FOR TWO worth £190 at **The Health Club & Spa at Hilton, St Georges Park.**

The Health Club and Spa at St. George's Park sits in harmony with its luxurious atmosphere of tranquillity, surrounded by acres of beautiful Staffordshire countryside.

Their facilities include a state-of-the-art gym with Technogym equipment, 17m pool with bubble pool, thermal experience foot spas, experience shower, ice fountain, sauna and steam room. Four treatment rooms are available, each with shower and heated bed. The Elemis products are available to purchase so the St. George's Park experience can be taken home. You will enjoy a truly harmonising treatment to not only relax your mind but repair your body and soul.

If you're not our lucky winner,



why not treat yourself? Whether you are off on holiday or have a special occasion to attend, why not treat yourself to a body treatment like no other? If it is anti-ageing, firming or cellulite that is your concern, let the spa's dedicated therapists envelop you with wonderful but truly effective wraps to put all your concerns at ease.

Our lucky winner will receive a "Switch Off Spa Day" for two. This is a relaxing day of quality 'me' time and includes:

- access to the Health Club & Spa
- a choice of TWO of the following treatments: Wellbeing Custom Back Massage, Skin Specific Facial, Spa Day Pedicure or Spa Day Manicure.

You can find more information at: **[www.healthclubandspasgp.com](http://www.healthclubandspasgp.com)**

To enter this month's competition, all you have to do is put your *name, address and daytime telephone contact number* on a postcard and send it to:

**Local Links Media,  
Suite 29,  
Anglesey Business Park,  
Anglesey Road,  
Burton-on-Trent,  
DE14 3NT**

Alternatively, you can e-mail your details to: **[local@locallinksmedia.co.uk](mailto:local@locallinksmedia.co.uk)**

The closing date for entries is the 10th of December, and the winners will be announced in our January edition.

Good luck to everyone who enters!

The Health Club and Spa  
Hilton at St. George's Park  
Newborough Road, Needwood  
Burton-upon-Trent  
Staffordshire, DE13 9PD

t: 01283 576675  
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# Pretty Poinsettias

At Christmas it's common to see poinsettia plants dotted around shops and homes, providing a welcome splash of festive colour. You could be forgiven for thinking that the poinsettia has always been associated with Christmas in the UK, but not so!

The poinsettia is a plant that is indigenous to Mexico. It is particularly well known for its red and green foliage and is widely used in Christmas floral displays. It derives its common English name from Joel Roberts Poinsett, who was the first United States Minister to Mexico, and who introduced the plant to the US in 1825.

The coloured bracts—which are most often flaming red but can be orange, pale green, cream, pink, white, or marbled—are often mistaken for flower petals because of their groupings and colours, but are actually leaves. The colours of the bracts are created through

photoperiodism, meaning that they require darkness (12 hours at a time for at least five days in a row) to change colour. At the same time, the plants require abundant light during the day for the brightest colour.

The plant's association with Christmas began in 16th-century Mexico, where legend tells of a girl, commonly called Pepita or Maria, who was too poor to provide a gift for the celebration of Jesus' birthday and was inspired by an angel to gather weeds from the roadside and place them in front of the church altar. Crimson blossoms sprouted from the weeds and became poinsettias.

There is a common misconception that the poinsettia is highly toxic. While the sap and latex of many plants of the spurge genus are indeed toxic, the poinsettia's toxicity is relatively mild. Though its latex can cause an allergic reaction in sensitive individuals.



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# What's On Guide

## MONDAY 18TH NOVEMBER

### Stapenhill WI

We meet at Immanuel Church Hawthorn Crescent Stapenhill from 10am to 12pm on the 3rd Monday of every month. Join us for friendship and an interesting programme of events. New members and visitors are assured of a warm welcome. Contact Teresa Tel 07720 863097

### Leagues 4U Social Netball

19:00 - 20:30 at John Taylor Free School and cost just £5. For further information visit [leagues4you.co.uk](http://leagues4you.co.uk) or text 07723414160.

## TUESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER

### Burton Dance & Social Club

Every Tuesday evening 8-11pm at Marstons Sports and Social Club, Shobnall Road. 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

### Shakespeare Group

Interested in Shakespeare? Limited spaces available. The group read and watch Shakespeares works Tuesdays 10 to 12 noon Call 01543 251556

## WEDNESDAY 20TH NOVEMBER

### Burton Amateur Radio Club

Burton Amateur Radio Club meets every Wednesday evening at 7-30pm New members are very welcome and we meet at Stapenhill Institute 23 Main St, Burton-on-Trent DE15 9AP Contact Bob 07812 146333 [www.g3nfc.co.uk](http://www.g3nfc.co.uk) or club@burton-arc.co.uk

## THURSDAY 21ST NOVEMBER

### Burton Jazz Club

Every Thursday, at Marstons' Sports and Social Club, Shobnall Road, we present some of the best Jazz Bands in Britain, and occasionally Europe. We book as wide a variety of jazz as possible, but are mostly Traditional, Swing and Mainstream. Admission £9 on door from 7.30pm, for 8.30pm start, no membership, all welcome.

### Stars

Stars is a weekly club for senior citizens held at Yoxall Parish Hall. Every Thursday 2-4pm. Variety of activities including quizzes, arts, crafts, special events and lots more. £3.50, includes tea or coffee, cakes, biscuits and raffle ticket into the weekly prize draw. For more details call Claire 01543 472145

## FRIDAY 22ND NOVEMBER

### Beginners Latin in-line Class

At The Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton, DE13 0HE - 11.15-12.00 pm NO PARTNERS REQUIRED - £4.00 Ring 07598159744 for more details.

### FitSteps with Rose

Fridays 18.00 at Want2Dance with Victoria, Wharf Road, Burton £5 per class. FitSteps is a fun class, based on ballroom and Latin dance steps, with no need for a partner. Beginners always welcome Contact: Rose 07562 331041 to book

## SATURDAY 23RD NOVEMBER

### Claymills Victorian Pumping Station

Guided tours given around one of Britain's largest Victorian steam pumping stations. Contact: 01283 509929

## SUNDAY 24TH NOVEMBER

### Sudbury Hall Christmas 'Game On'

Join us this Christmas when for the very first time, we invite you to play the Sudbury game. Play your way around the hall with larger-than-life versions of family favourite board games. Expect festive surprises around every corner as you and your family enter the magical world of games in the Sudbury Christmas Compendium.

## MONDAY 25TH NOVEMBER

### Meno Class with Sam

Support, education and exercise to help you to take control of menopause. Every Monday at 7.30pm at Want2Dance with Victoria, Wharf Road, Burton on Trent DE14 1PZ. Classes are £8 and must be booked in advance as space is limited. For more information call Sam on 07866 746215 or email [sam.lee@menohealth.co.uk](mailto:sam.lee@menohealth.co.uk)

### Meditation

Weekly Classes of Meditation on Mondays 1pm to 2.30pm and 7.30pm to 9.30pm we are a friendly group who meet for discussion and to meditate with a guided meditation. To join us Contact Kim 07580 551979

## TUESDAY 26TH NOVEMBER

### Carers + Cafes

Carers + cafe meets in the Brewhouse every Tuesday from 10 o'clock to 12.30 pm organised by the Rotary club of Burton upon Trent it is for Carers and the cared for to meet with and make new friends, enjoy a cup of coffee or tea in a safe and friendly environment.

## WEDNESDAY 27TH NOVEMBER

### Barton Under Needwood Flower Club

Barton flower club invite you to a demonstration by Sandra Gunner entitled "I'm dreaming of ...." 7.30pm in St James church hall, sales table, raffle and refreshments visitors £8.00 everyone welcome.

## THURSDAY 28TH NOVEMBER

### Beginners Ballroom & Latin Dance

Learn to dance in a relaxed and informal setting you will soon learn to waltz, cha-cha, and foxtrox your way around the dance floor. The 8 week course costs just £40, or £6 per class per week. 6.30pm to 7.15pm, no partner necessary. Location: Want2Dance with Victoria, Wharf Road, Burton, DE14 1PZ. For more information please contact: 07791204903

## FRIDAY 29TH NOVEMBER

### Tots, Pots & Tales

Fridays at The Mug Tug, Barton Marina. Listen to a story and paint a pot related to the tale. Juice and biscuit for the Tots, Grown-ups welcome to bring their own hot drinks. 1.30pm to 2.30pm - See our website for more details. Call 01283 711341 to book.

### Baby Sing 'n' Jam

At The Hub at St Mary's Lichfield, exciting live music event especially created for babies, toddlers and their families! Led by professional singer Kelly Percival with support from her live band. Ticket Details Each session lasts 45 minutes - 2 sessions 10am & 11:30am £9 for one adult and one under 3, £5 for an additional adult or under 3. For more information visit: [www.thehubstmarys.co.uk](http://www.thehubstmarys.co.uk)

## SATURDAY 30TH NOVEMBER

### Literature Festival in a Day

Bring your bookmarks and reading glasses for, Literature Festival in A Day. Held at The Hub, four best-selling authors join us in this taster for the Lichfield Literature Festival Tickets are per Author, 2 hour session - £10 /£8 for under 16's. For more information visit: [www.thehubstmarys.co.uk](http://www.thehubstmarys.co.uk)

## SUNDAY 1ST DECEMBER

### East Staffordshire Ramblers

Walkers of all abilities are welcome to join us on Wednesdays, Fridays & weekends for walks in Staffs, Derbys & Leics. Visit [www.eaststaffsramblers.org.uk](http://www.eaststaffsramblers.org.uk) or contact 01283 713209.

## MONDAY 2ND DECEMBER

### Burton Prostate Cancer Support Group

Men suffering, being treated, or recently diagnosed with Prostate Cancer, plus spouses, are invited to join with a dynamic Support Group meeting at Burton Library, Riverside, DE14 1AH. First Monday in the month except Bank Holidays. Always call to check meetings: 07478 889577, or email on: [burton.prostate.cancer.supportgroup@gmail.com](mailto:burton.prostate.cancer.supportgroup@gmail.com)

# Find more events on our website

## TUESDAY 3RD DECEMBER

### Painting For Pleasure

Every Tuesday from 1pm to 3.30pm. Painting for Pleasure is a meeting place for artists to practise their skills in a friendly group. The cost is £12 per month, for the room hire. Contact Dave Jones for more information on: 07429 074758

## WEDNESDAY 4TH 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

### 1st Burton Guides

Every Wednesday Evening. A fantastic unit for girls aged 10-14. They will make friends, grow in confidence and learn lots of new skills. Enjoying a wide range of activities, from ice skating to canoeing, and craft to cooking, there is something for every girl! Call: 07794 759608

### Barton-Under-Needwood WI

1st Wednesday of every month at The Village Hall, Crowberry Lane. 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 5TH DECEMBER

### Beginners Ballroom & Latin Dance

Learn to waltz, cha-cha, and foxtrots your way around the dance floor. The 8 week course costs just £40, or £6 per class per week. 6.30pm to 7.15pm, no partner necessary. Want2Dance with Victoria, Europa House, Wharf Road, Burton, DE14 1PZ. For more information contact Victoria Neale on: 07791 204903

## FRIDAY 6TH DECEMBER

### Burton Flower Club

We meet at The Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton DE13 0HE on the first Friday of the month at 7.30pm. Visitors are always welcome. Contact 01283 704180/ 01283 348754, visit [www.flowersnorthmidlands.co.uk](http://www.flowersnorthmidlands.co.uk)

### Momentum - Young Musicians on Stage

Lichfield Arts provides an opportunity for talented young bands and musicians to cut their teeth performing on a stage. Come along and enjoy an evening of music from some of the areas local talent. Who knows who you might discover! For more information visit: [www.thehubstmarys.co.uk](http://www.thehubstmarys.co.uk)

## SATURDAY 7TH DECEMBER

### A Festive Concert

A festive concert with Beatus Musical Director James Foulds 7.30pm at St. Wystan's Church, Repton. An evening of a cappella singing old and new Christmas carols and songs. Tickets available at the door or contact 01283 702410

### A Christmas Concert & Burton Big Band

At St Mary's Church Hall on Hillfield Lane, Stretton, and will start at 7pm. Tickets are £5 each and are available from Laura & Paul Spencer on 01283 561566 or from the Parish Office on 01283 564216.

## SUNDAY 8TH DECEMBER

### Barton Bowls & Social Club

Now open every evening! Darts, pool, dominoes, crib and crown green bowls during bowling season. Members, members guests and new members always welcome

## MONDAY 9TH DECEMBER

### Briz Valley WI

Meeting at Violet Way Academy, Violet Way, Stapenhill on the 2nd Monday of the month, 7.30-9.30pm. We like to keep our meetings informal and friendly with an interesting programme of events. New members and visitors are always welcome, so why not come along and see what you think. For further details please contact Pat 07580568883

## TUESDAY 10TH DECEMBER

### Walton-on-Trent WI

Every 2nd Tuesday of the month at 7.15pm at Walton Village Hall. Come and join us for fun, friendship, learning and sharing. For more information contact: Joan on 01283 713380

### Branston Womens' Institute

Held the 2nd Tuesday of each month. We are a friendly group and try to mix our meetings with interesting talks, craft, trips and social events. Contact Mrs Barbara Reeves, President, Tel. 01283 546536

## WEDNESDAY 11TH DECEMBER

### Stretton & Claymills Women's Institute

Meeting in the back room of the Priory Centre, Church Road, Stretton at 7.15pm on the second Wednesday of every month and new members are very welcome. For info email: [strettonandclaymillswi@gmail.com](mailto:strettonandclaymillswi@gmail.com)

## THURSDAY 12TH 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. £4 a month or £41 a year. Come along, make new friends, try something new and have fun. Contact:

Wendy Plant Tel: 07772 548230

### Fafunia Snowy Stories

Come explore and play in a winter wonderland! Sing, dance and be merry in a magical land of snowflakes and stars! An interactive storytelling experience based in the fairy kingdom 'Fafunia!' inspired by Icelandic Folklore. Suitable for age 3+ or early years with parental supervision. For more information visit: [www.thehubstmarys.co.uk](http://www.thehubstmarys.co.uk)

## FRIDAY 13TH DECEMBER

### Loving Jeremy Corbyn: Self Help Guide

A humorous, intelligent, poetry show about Labour, Tories and the division of the left by BBC Slam Champion, Jess Green. She's fallen head over heels in love with Jeremy Corbyn and his raw socialist magnetism but if only everyone else agreed. Following the success of her first show, Burning Books which received 5 star reviews both at the Edinburgh Fringe, Jess returns with a rousing, lyrical and humorous look at modern politics. For more information visit: [www.thehubstmarys.co.uk](http://www.thehubstmarys.co.uk)

## COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to our **Remona** competition winners, each winning a £25 Voucher:

**Mrs. Dawn Craner, Branston**  
**Christine Benning, Barton**  
**Emma Wigley, Rolleston-on-Dove**  
**Mrs. D. Simpson, Barton**  
**Rachel Hughes-Rowlands, N'ampton**  
**Sarah Banks, Barton**  
**Stephen Johnson, Stapenhill**  
**Shirley Huckerby, Burton**

Look out elsewhere in **LOCAL LINKS** this month to win A Switch Off Spa Day for Two from Hilton Spa

## LAST MONTH'S SUDOKU PUZZLE SOLUTION

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3	5	9	4	1	8	2	6	7
1	6	8	5	2	7	9	4	3
7	1	5	8	9	4	6	3	2
9	3	6	2	7	1	4	8	5
2	8	4	3	6	5	7	9	1
5	4	2	7	8	6	3	1	9
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# What The Dickens!

Few writers are more inextricably linked with Christmas than Charles Dickens. There are plenty of Christmas tales, but none that resonate as much around the world as "A Christmas Carol". Countless adaptations of this story have been performed and filmed in the last century, from serious actors to Muppets injecting their own brand of humour into the telling of the tale.

But how much did Charles Dickens shape Christmas as we now know it?

Christmas celebrations had actually been falling out of fashion at the time in England. Old customs like carols, 12-day feasts, and Father Christmas had all but faded away, and the Christmas tree was still a new-fangled fad from Germany, an idea imported by Prince Albert, Queen Victoria's Husband, in 1841.

It was the end of the Industrial Revolution after all, and most of England was poor. Child labour was common. Working conditions were generally abysmal. Charles Dickens had firsthand experience with this: as a child, he was forced to leave school and work 10-hour days in a boot-blackening warehouse in order to support his family.

By 1843, he was already a successful author, but the memory of brutal childhood poverty never left him. He toured factories, mines, and government run schools, and

was consistently appalled by the abuse of working class children.

The most widespread theories of how to "help" the poor at the time revolved around getting the poor to "help themselves." The idea was that work-houses and prisons should be unpleasant, so poor people would be motivated to work harder and improve their station in life. This refused to recognise the situations that those in poverty are subject to, often poor health and disability, eliminating their ability to work and change their circumstances.

"A Christmas Carol" was written in six weeks and finished by the end of November. The book was published during the Christmas season of 1843 and its low selling price did not bring in a lot of profits. The book however, was an immediate success. By Christmas Eve, the first edition of A

Christmas Carol had entirely sold out.

The story's vocabulary has crept into today's conversations, with a "Scrooge" being someone who refuses to get in the holiday spirit, and "Tiny Tim" being any innocent in a vulnerable situation.

The story does not only give us a vivid portrayal of Christmas feasting, Dickens is also concerned to tell a story of change, of release from the imprisoning chains of material wealth and possessions into the freedom of compassion and generosity.

Most importantly, every time this piece of literature is read or displayed on the silver screen, it reminds us of a vision of Christmas that has little to do with displays of wealth, and instead focuses on loved ones and the joy of an act of charity.





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				1				
		1	5	9		8		

Sudoku is a logic puzzle where you follow one simple rule:

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