

LOCAL LINKS

A stylized illustration of Santa Claus with a white beard, wearing a red hat and round glasses. He is holding a large, wrapped gift with a green ribbon and bow. The background is a dark purple with a geometric pattern of triangles.

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ISSUE 135

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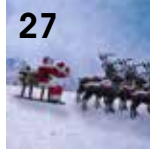
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ISSUE 135

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Dear Readers,

'Twas the magazine before Christmas and all through the Local Links office we've been double busy putting together both our December and January magazines! It is very much a busy time of year for all of us no doubt, but we hope you are looking forward to a lovely and restful Christmas break?

In this jam-packed Christmas issue we've got some super stuffing recipes one for vegans & veggies, the other for those that eat meat. If you eat too much stuffing and become stuffed, we've got some tips on how to alleviate the discomfort of a too full tum.

We've also got some interesting festive articles about a popular carol and a popular Christmas story, so we do hope you snuggle up with a hot drink and your festive copy of Local Links this festive season.

Merry Christmas to all, and to all a good night!

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Fri 20th December

Next issue out from:

Wed 15th January

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Stuffed with Stuffing

Let's face it... there's little more delicious on the Christmas dinner plate than a really good stuffing! Who doesn't like to cook far too much and eat it in sandwiches on boxing day? The herby, stodgy crispy edged goodness is always a delight to pick at between festive chocolates and mince pies!

If you will be feeding others this year, we've found a brilliant vegan friendly recipe that vegetarians will love too!

For the Vegans & Vegetarians!

Ingredients:

1 tbsp oil
1 small onion, diced
1 small red onion, diced
3 cloves garlic, minced
300 g mushrooms
1/4 tsp dried thyme
1/4 tsp dried oregano
1/2 tsp dried sage
180 g cooked and peeled chestnuts, e.g. tinned or vacuum-packed
100 g wholemeal bread (~ 2 inch thick slice of a large loaf)
Small bunch fresh parsley
Salt
Black pepper

Method:

- Preheat the oven to 190°C (Gas Mark 5 / 375°F).
- Heat the oil in a frying pan, and add the diced onions, garlic and mushrooms. Cook over a medium heat for about

5 minutes, until the vegetables are soft and any excess liquid has evaporated.

- Transfer the vegetables to a food processor, along with the remaining ingredients. Season generously, and blitz until the mixture just comes together.
- Transfer the stuffing mixture to a baking dish, and bake for around 40 minutes, until crispy on top. Serve warm.

For the Meat Eaters!

Ingredients:

1 onion, very finely chopped
25g butter
1 garlic clove, crushed
100g fresh white breadcrumbs
1kg sausage meat
1 large apple, peeled, cored & finely chopped
Large handful fresh parsley, finely chopped
Small handful fresh sage, finely chopped
1 egg, beaten (optional, it makes for a less crumbly stuffing, so add to your own preference)
Salt & pepper

Method:

- Fry the onion gently in a small knob of butter until just tender, approx. 10 mins.
- Put the onion, garlic and breadcrumbs in a large bowl. Add 75ml water and use your hands to mix it together. Mix in the sausage meat,

apple, parsley, sage and some salt and pepper to season.

- Mix in the beaten egg if you prefer a less crumbly stuffing.
- Spread into a lightly greased baking dish, cover with foil and cook at 190°C/Gas 5 for 30 minutes, then uncover and cook for a further 10 minutes or so, until slightly crunchy on top.

Alternatively, you can cook both these recipes by rolling a spoonful into balls and baking on a baking sheet sprayed lightly with oil. Cook for 20 minutes and then check every five until cooked through. Cooking this way will give you much more crispy surface area.



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See the New Year in, in Style!

Many of us have parties to go to over the festive season and want something a little extra special to wear. We've had a look at what's on trend to make sure you're the most stylish person at the party this year.

White and Sparkles

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Red Velvet Update

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By The Barn

by Angela Sargent



December already and after such a wet couple of months, please let it be dry!

All over the country, farmers have struggled to harvest maize and potato crops, to work and resow fields and some still have seed corn and fertiliser in store, with the financial impact that that carries. Machinery has been stuck axle deep in sludge filled fields, whilst river side pasture has been swamped.

Whilst brexit uncertainty continues, we are having an election - so what do our prospective MPs think of food? They give lip service to maintaining our high standards to win votes, but do they mean

it when it comes to forming trade deals? So why want high standards over here if you're not bothered about the standards of what you bring in? The Government could end up pricing our own industry and workforce out of the market completely, with unrealistic pricing demands.

This year we've not seen as many Lapwings or Skylarks, which usually nest on our fields - and only two partridge chicks (which we only saw for a few days) - we grow a cover crop to provide food and habitat for such birds and animals all year round. But we have seen many more predators both in the sky (such as Buzzards/Sparrowhawks) and on the ground (Stoat/foxes/badgers).

Marketing our lambs continues and Ted has an increase in his workload at this time of year - fetching them in for us to weigh and check weekly before taking them back and then bringing those in we have kept to one side when we want to load up.

Consequently he is always pretty well mucked up and, although I make him wait to be let in, he always manages to shake in the kitchen - the paintwork and furniture has what resembles a Pollock-style look about them, as do our clothes if we're too near him when he does!

Merry Christmas from the farm. Follow Angela @bythebarn.

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Festive Feasting

The temptation of Christmas dinner is too much for most of us to resist and an overstuffed stomach makes for a miserable few hours.

While you wait for your gastrointestinal system to work its magic and digest the food, you can take some simple steps to ease your stomach discomfort.

Loosen Things Up

When your stomach is stretched from an overabundance of food and drink, you can ease the pressure by removing anything constricting your belly from the outside. Remove anything that is squeezing you around your middle, such as a belt, tight-fitting trousers or shapewear. If possible, change into some comfy pants, a nightshirt or other loose-fitting clothing until your stomach feels better.

Let the Gas Out

When you eat a super-sized meal, you typically swallow quite a bit of air as well. So if you feel the urge to belch, go ahead and do it — assuming you're in a situation wherein doing so wouldn't be an embarrassing social faux pas.

Allowing gas to escape your stomach helps reduce the internal pressure and uncomfortable stretching. It's easiest to belch when you're in an upright position as the gas tends to rise to the top of your stomach where you can then easily expel it through your oesophagus.

Go for a Walk

While you likely feel like parking yourself on the couch or taking a nap after eating too much, you will likely feel much better if you go for a nice long walk instead. Walking helps move food out of your stomach and through your intestines more quickly. It also helps relieve heartburn, which frequently accompanies stomach discomfort when you have overeaten. Walking offers the bonus benefit of helping reduce the expected rise in blood sugar and triglycerides that occurs after a meal.

Take a Break From Feasting

When you've stuffed yourself to the point of stomach discomfort, it is time to take a break from eating and drinking for at least a few hours. This gives your stomach a chance to empty. The amount of time

needed to completely empty your stomach significantly increases if you have eaten a large amount of high-fat foods. It's best to also eschew smoking and chewing gum to avoid swallowing air, further distending your already bloated stomach. When you feel up to eating again, try sticking to light low-fat fare, such as a small bowl of clear soup and a cup of tea or coffee.

Consider a Digestive Aid

You might consider an over-the-counter digestive aid if your discomfort persists despite trying other measures. Chewing a couple of antacid tablets can help, especially if you are experiencing heartburn as well as stomach discomfort. Products containing bismuth subsalicylate claim to relieve a variety of digestive symptoms that might plague you after eating too much, including indigestion, heartburn and stomach upset. Anti-gas products that contain simethicone (like Petlatine or Dulcogas) are particularly helpful if you are suffering with a lot of gas and belching along with your stomach discomfort.



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Are You Dreaming of One?

The jury is out as to whether we will get a white Christmas this year! In the UK, white Christmases were more common from the 1550s to the 1850s, during the Little Ice Age; the last frost fair on the River Thames, however, was in the winter of 1813–14.

Did you know that shift from the Julian to the Gregorian calendar in 1752 also slightly reduced the chance of a white Christmas? The change effectively moved Christmas earlier in the winter.

Before 2006, for betting purposes, a Met Office employee was required to record if any snow fell on the London Weather Centre over the 24 hours of Christmas Day; after 2006 computers were used.

An “official” white Christmas is defined by the Met Office as “one snowflake to be observed falling in the 24 hours of 25 December somewhere in the UK”, but formerly the snow had to be observed at the Met Office building in London. By the newer measure, over half of all years have white Christmases, with snow being observed 38 times. A more “traditional” idea of snow-covered ground is less common, however, with only 4 occasions reporting snow on the ground at 9am at more than 40% of weather stations.

Although most places in the UK do tend to see some snow in the winter, it generally falls in January and February. However white Christmases



do occur, on average every 6 years.

Christmas 2009 was a white Christmas in some parts of Britain, with thick lying snow which easterly winds had brought over the previous week. Travel over much of Britain was badly affected by ice and snow on roads, and was made more slippery by partial daytime thaw followed by overnight refreezing. It was the first white Christmas anywhere in the United Kingdom since 2004. There was another white Christmas in 2010, it was also the coldest Christmas Day ever recorded.

In the past, the Met Office

used a single location to define a white Christmas – which was the Met Office building in London – but decided to change the definition.

With the increase in betting on where will see a white Christmas, the number of locations have increased and can now include sites such as Buckingham Palace, Belfast (Aldergrove Airport), Aberdeen (Pittodrie – Aberdeen FC), Edinburgh (Castle), Coronation Street in Manchester and the Millennium Stadium in Cardiff.

The Met Office analyse data from their observing stations around the UK to provide a complete picture of where snow has fallen or was lying on Christmas Day.

According to the weather forecasters, the last widespread white Christmas in the UK was in 2010. This was an extremely unusual one, as not only was there snow on the ground at 83% of stations (the highest amount ever recorded) but snow or sleet also fell at 19% of stations.

2015 was also “technically a white Christmas” in the UK with 10% of weather stations recording snow falling. However, no-one reported any snow lying on the ground.

Here’s hoping we get one for 2019!

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Winter Wishes

We do admit to getting a little giddy in the run up to Christmas. We love all the festivities, tradition, warmth and good old silliness that happens when friends and family get together. We thought we'd wish you a 'Merry Christmas' with some of our favourite festive words! Why not choose a Christmas word yourself and give it a go!

M

Mulled wine, warm and spicy fruity. We keep ours in the slow cooker on low so that it's always ready to dip into and fills the house with a deliciously Christmassy smell. Teamed with a mince pie - heaven!

E

Everyone getting together. It's lovely to sit around the table with your nearest and dearest, but what's also great is seeing friends and family you might not have visited in a while. If you've got an elderly neighbour, check in with them to make sure they're ok.

R

Red, this colour is everywhere at this time of year! From the velvet of Santa Claus' arctic suit, ribbon on presents, lights on trees to reindeer's noses. It certainly is the Christmas colour! The colour that fills us with the spirit of community and giving over receiving!

R

Reindeer, who do the most difficult job flying all night to make sure all the presents reach all the good little boys and girls. Don't forget to leave Rudolph a carrot!

Y

Yuletide carols, we all have a favourite one, that really makes us feel the spirit of the season right into our bones. Have a look in our What's On pages for a carol service near you! Or if you prefer, listen to something more secular and rock around the tree!

C

Charity, many people say that this begins at home, but if you and your family are lucky enough to live comfortably, we spare a thought for those less fortunate than ourselves. Many people in society struggle to get by all year 'round.

H

Home & hearth, nothing sets the scene more snugly than a fire in the grate. Even if you don't have a fire, being able to come home to a warm home with twinkling lights is a joy!

R

Revelry and games, be they card games, board games, charades.. at Christmas a playful spirit takes over and we can all enjoy a good dose of laughter and cheer! Or not if someone is far too competitive!

I

Icicles, snow, frost, as much as we love our snuggly homes, we do wish for it to be crisp and cold and bright outside. We need to justify the daft elf jumpers after all!

S

Santa Claus, our favourite saint doing his busy job of visiting children around the world and leaving them presents or a lump of coal depending on their track record over the previous year. It's not too late kids, get those good deeds in fast!

T

Tree decorations, you may have a highly stylish tree adorned with decorations in this year's on-trend colour, or a hotchpotch of paper and crayon decorations, 80's foil cone baubles with threadbare sentimental tinsel. Your tree is always perfect for you!

M

Mistletoe, a decoration not easy to come by, but if you manage to find some, it is the prettiest plant to adorn your home. Who doesn't like any excuse to give your loved ones a kiss? Don't go jumping on strangers though, that would be a very bad idea!

A

All is calm, well, eventually! The build up can get hectic, but there's always a moment when you've done everything and anything you haven't isn't important. Just sit down and watch the snowman or listen to Bing!

S

Starry nights, our dark, dark crisp cold evenings can give us the most beautiful view of the visible universe. Take a moment to appreciate how truly small we all are and what an amazing planet we all share together!

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James Frost is a REPs fully qualified and insured Personal Trainer since June 2017, GP Exercise Referral Specialist since June 2016 and Fitness Instructor since May 2015. Also CRB checked and first aid trained James is a graduate of BScHons in Exercise, Nutrition & Health from Nottingham Trent University in 2017. James is graduating with an MRes in Sport Science and completed a years work experience during his MRes year shadowing head



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You can find more information at: www.frostfitnesspt.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,
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DE14 9NQ**

Alternatively, you can e-mail your details to:

local@locallinksmedia.co.uk

The closing date for entries is the 14th of January and the winners will be announced in our February edition. Good luck to everyone who enters!

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Wenceslas Who?

One of our favourite Christmas carols is a story of a King with a rather peculiar name. We were curious as to who this King was and how the carol came about, so we thought we'd have a look!

'Good King Wenceslas' is a Christmas carol that tells a story of a Bohemian king going on a journey and braving harsh winter weather to give alms to a poor peasant on the Feast of Stephen (December 26, the Second Day of Christmas also known in the UK as Boxing Day). During the journey, his page is about to give up the struggle against the cold weather, but is enabled to continue by following the king's footprints, step for step, through the deep snow.

The legend is based on the life of the historical Saint Wenceslaus I, Duke of Bohemia or Svatý Václav in the now Czech Republic who lived between 907–935 AD. The name Wenceslas is a Latinised version of the old Czech language "Wenceslav".

In 1853, English hymnwriter John Mason Neale wrote the "Wenceslas" lyrics, in collaboration with his music editor Thomas Helmore, and the carol first appeared in Carols for Christmas-Tide,



published by Novello & Co in 1853. Neale's lyrics were set to the melody of a 13th-century spring carol "Tempus adest floridum" ("The time is near for flowering") first published in 1582.

Wenceslas was considered a martyr and a saint immediately after his death in the 10th century, when a cult of Wenceslas rose up in Bohemia and in England. Although Wenceslas was, during his lifetime, only a duke, Holy Roman Emperor Otto I (962–973) posthumously "conferred on him the regal dignity and title and that is why, in the legend and song, he is referred to as a "king".

Wenceslas is not to be confused with King Wenceslaus I of Bohemia (Wenceslaus I Premyslid), who lived more than three centuries later.

With lyrics that embody all that's wonderful about the spirit of Christmas, whether you are of any world faith or of none, be sure to take the story and sentiment of looking after those less fortunate with you into 2020!

Good King Wenceslas

'Good King Wenceslas looked out, on the Feast of Stephen, When the snow lay round about, deep and crisp and even;

Brightly shone the moon that night, tho' the frost was cruel, When a poor man came in sight, gath'ring winter fuel.

"Hither, page, and stand by me, if thou know'st it, telling, Yonder peasant, who is he? Where and what his dwelling?"

"Sire, he lives a good league hence, underneath the mountain;

Right against the forest fence, by Saint Agnes' fountain."

"Bring me flesh, and bring me wine, bring me pine logs hither:

Thou and I shall see him dine, when we bear them thither."
Page and monarch, forth they went, forth they went together;

Through the rude wind's wild lament and the bitter weather.

"Sire, the night is darker now, and the wind blows stronger; Fails my heart, I know not how; I can go no longer."

"Mark my footsteps, good my page. Tread thou in them boldly

Thou shalt find the winter's rage freeze thy blood less coldly."

In his master's steps he trod, where the snow lay dinted; Heat was in the very sod which the saint had printed.

Therefore, Christian men, be sure, wealth or rank possessing,

Ye who now will bless the poor, shall yourselves find blessing.

What's On Guide

MONDAY 16TH DECEMBER

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 or text 07723414160.

TUESDAY 17TH DECEMBER

Lichfield Cathedral Christmas Concert

At 'The Hub at St Mary's'. This special Christmas concert will include festive music old and new, by composers including Praetorius, Walton, Macmillan, Lassus and Rutter. Formed almost 40 years ago, the Lichfield Cathedral Chamber Choir is a versatile ensemble that has a wide-ranging repertoire of sacred and secular music. Visit: www.thehubstmarys.co.uk/whats-on-booking

Shakespeare Group

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

WEDNESDAY 18TH DECEMBER

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 or club@burton-arc.co.uk

THURSDAY 19TH DECEMBER

Rangemore & Tatenhill WI

On the third Thursday of every month we meet at Henhurst and District Recreational Club, starting at 7.30 p.m. Throughout the year we support a broad programme of activities, events and speakers to suit all age ranges. We are a friendly and diverse group that always welcomes new members to our meetings. For more information please contact Marian on 07752160996

#FSBConnect Burton

#FSBConnect Burton offers FREE and friendly open business networking in the beautiful surroundings of Dovecliff Hall country house hotel, DE13 0DJ, close to the A38. It is open to all small businesses, members of the FSB and non-members, so feel free to bring a colleague! Arrive from 9.30am. Enjoy a hot drink and chat to fellow biz owners. Ends 11.30am

FRIDAY 20TH DECEMBER

Beginner's 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 21ST DECEMBER

Claymills Victorian Pumping Station

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

Très Très Cabaret

The show that has everyone talking is back at The Hub! Très Très Cabaret brings you the very best in cabaret, burlesque and variety from the UK and beyond! With an all-star line-up yet to be announced, Très Très Cabaret will stir your soul and thrill your heart! Visit: www.thehubstmarys.co.uk/whats-on-booking

SUNDAY 22ND DECEMBER

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 23RD DECEMBER

Meno Class with Sam

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

TUESDAY 24TH DECEMBER

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.

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

FRIDAY 27TH DECEMBER

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.

SATURDAY 28TH DECEMBER

Barton Bowls & Social Club

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

SUNDAY 29TH 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 or contact 01283 713209.

MONDAY 30TH DECEMBER

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 31ST 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

THURSDAY 2ND JANUARY

Beginners Ballroom & Latin Dance

Learn to waltz, cha-cha, and foxtrot 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

Find more events on our website

Burton Jazz Club

Every Thursday, at Marston's 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 3RD JANUARY

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

Fitsteps with Rose

Fridays 18.00 at Want2Dance with Victoria, Wharf Road, Burton £5 per class FitSteps is a fun, energetic dance exercise class, based on ballroom and Latin dance steps, with no need for a partner. Have fun getting fit like the stars of "Strictly Come Dancing" as we give, tango, quickstep, samba and more. Beginners always welcome Contact: Rose 07562 331041 to book

SATURDAY 4TH JANUARY

Sudbury Hall Christmas "Game On"

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.

SUNDAY 5TH JANUARY

Burton 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 6TH JANUARY

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.support@gmail.com

Rolleston WI

Monthly Meeting John of Rolleston School Chapel Lane Rolleston - Rolleston WI is a thriving group meeting every month to enjoy good speakers friendship & fun. We have theatre outings, meals out, visits, & short holidays Visitors very welcome. For more information contact Verity on: 01283 813414

TUESDAY 7TH JANUARY

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. There are occasional visits and demonstrations from visiting artists. New members are welcome to come along and see for themselves.

Anslow Art Class

At Anslow Village Hall every Tuesday afternoon from 1-3pm. Discover how to draw and paint, use colour with confidence and create beautiful art in a friendly group with experienced artist and tutor Helen Tarr. All levels are welcome. Fees: £11 per class paid on the day or £9 per class for 6 weeks. For further details and to book your place please phone Helen on 07791 228 881 or email: helentarr2002@yahoo.co.uk

WEDNESDAY 8TH JANUARY

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

THURSDAY 9TH JANUARY

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

FRIDAY 10TH JANUARY

Beginner's 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.

SATURDAY 11TH JANUARY

Burton Bowls & Social Club

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SUNDAY 12TH JANUARY

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 or contact 01283 713209.

MONDAY 13TH JANUARY

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 14TH JANUARY

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

COMPETITION WINNERS

Congratulations to our **Swadlincote Ski Centre** competition winner who has won a 'Fun & Ski Day' for four people:

Tim Favell, Rolleston-on-Dove

Look out elsewhere in **LOCAL LINKS** this month to win Personal Training Sessions from Frost Fitness.

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'Twas The Night Before Christmas

Twas the night before Christmas and all through the house, not one of us knew how this story came about! Loved by families up and down the UK you might be surprised to know that the story originated in America and fundamentally changed how we thought Santa Claus goes about his business!

The poem originally titled "A Visit from St. Nicholas" was first published anonymously in 1823. The poem has been called arguably the best-known verses ever written by an American and is largely responsible for some of the conceptions of Santa Claus from the mid-nineteenth century to today. It has had a massive impact on the history of Christmas gift-giving. Before the poem gained wide popularity, American ideas had varied considerably about Saint Nicholas and other Christmastide visitors.

The authorship of "A Visit" is credited to Clement Clarke Moore who is said to have composed it on a snowy winter's day during a trip on a sleigh. His inspiration

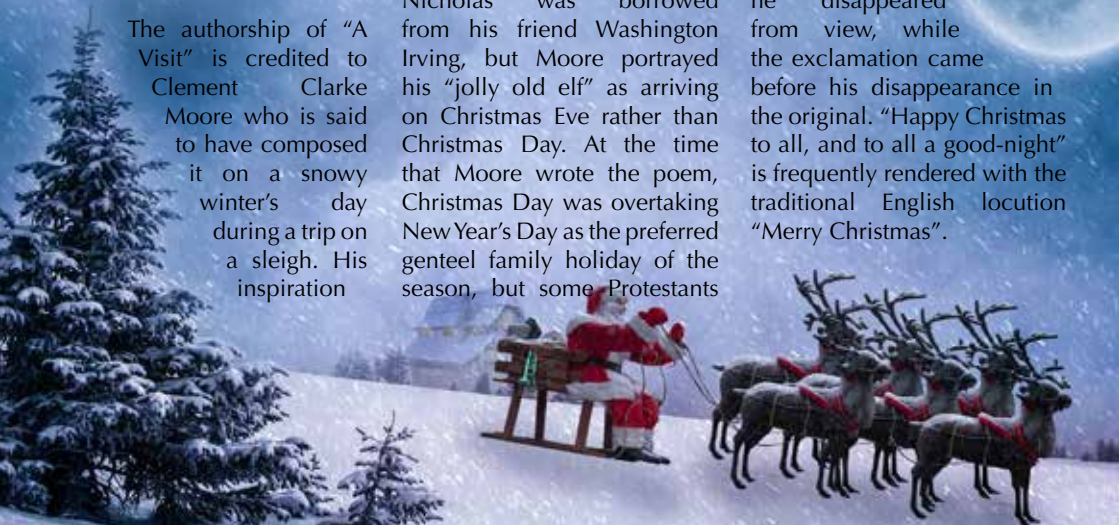
for the character of Saint Nicholas was a local Dutch handyman as well as the historical Saint Nicholas. Moore originated many of the features that are still associated with Santa Claus today while borrowing other aspects, such as the use of reindeer. The poem was first published anonymously in the Troy, New York Sentinel on 23 December 1823, having been sent there by a friend of Moore and was reprinted frequently thereafter with no name attached. It was first attributed in print to Moore in 1837.

Moore had a reputation as an erudite professor and had not wished at first to be connected with the unscholarly verse. He eventually included it in his own published works at the insistence of his children, for whom he had originally written the piece.

Moore's conception of Saint Nicholas was borrowed from his friend Washington Irving, but Moore portrayed his "jolly old elf" as arriving on Christmas Eve rather than Christmas Day. At the time that Moore wrote the poem, Christmas Day was overtaking New Year's Day as the preferred genteel family holiday of the season, but some Protestants

viewed Christmas as the result of "Catholic ignorance and deception" and still had reservations. By having Saint Nicholas arrive the night before, Moore deftly shifted the focus away from Christmas Day with its still "problematic" religious associations. As a result, "New Yorkers embraced Moore's child-centered version of Christmas as if they had been doing it all their lives."

Modern printings frequently incorporate alterations that reflect changing linguistic and cultural sensibilities. For example, breast in "The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow" is frequently bowdlerized to crest; the archaic ere in "But I heard him exclaim ere he drove out of sight" is frequently replaced with as. This change implies that Santa Claus made his exclamation at the moment he disappeared from view, while the exclamation came before his disappearance in the original. "Happy Christmas to all, and to all a good-night" is frequently rendered with the traditional English locution "Merry Christmas".



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Winter Grooming for Your Dog

You may think that during the winter it is best to let your dog's hair grow long and thick to keep them warm and to stop them from feeling the winter chill, however grooming couldn't be more important than at this time of year.

Whilst out walking with your 4-legged friend this winter you need to be aware of what the weather conditions can do to their paws and coat. Wet and rainy weather can result in long, wet and matted fur. Grit/salt on the roads and icy conditions can leave your dog's paws full of little ice balls coupled with the grit and anything else they might pick up along the way. All of this can easily lead to a cold, wet and infection-susceptible dog.

While it's true that double-coated breeds and others with thick, long fur are more 'winter-ready' than short haired dogs, the 'blessing' of these thick coats in winter can quickly become a curse if the coat isn't maintained in a healthy condition.

Fur that's matted doesn't insulate or provide warmth; instead, it provides discomfort, pain and hot spots. Matting can even lead to infections below the skin, so when considering the effects of less frequent grooming, consider how your dog's health may be affected as a result. Grooming isn't just to make your dog look beautiful it also crucial to your dog's good health.

So, what can you do?

It isn't all bad, there are things you can do to keep your dog and their coat well maintained and it's quite easy to do:

1. Rinse Paws – after those long walks simply rinse your dog's paws with a bowl of warm water and towel dry to ensure there are no hidden nasties between the pads.

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2. Brush – give your dog's coat a dry with a towel or blow dryer (on low heat) followed by a thorough brush through.
3. Keep Dry – If you bathe your dog at home always ensure they are properly dried before going outside as they can get chills just like you, just imagine going out in the icy cold weather with wet hair... not fun!
4. Regular Grooming Schedule – Ensure you continue to visit your groomer every 6-8 weeks to have a good all over groom, including getting those pads trimmed. Removing hair from the pads can help to stop unwanted bits clinging in between them and stop icy cold water getting soaked in. Keeping your dog's coat at a more manageable length will make it easier for you to stick to a routine and keep them matt free.

LOCAL LINKS SUDOKU

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

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

Simply fill in the boxes so that the nine rows, the nine columns, and the nine 3x3 squares all contain every digit from 1-9.

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