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Friday, December 19th 2025 Week 51

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SME UK Legal Awards 2025

Cell match is real gift for brave Leo

by **Ryan Smith**
 ryan.smith@bullivantmedia.com

THE FAMILY of a Bromsgrove teenager who has leukaemia and desperately needed a stem cell transplant have received a dream early Christmas present as a match has been found in the UK.

The family of 16-year-old Leo Spronson received the wonderful news on Tuesday, just days after finding out the teen was in remission.

Leo's bone marrow results showed the signs and symptoms of Leo's leukaemia had lessened, indicating a positive response to treatment.

Since Leo was first told he was in remission, his blood has been really stable and, for the first time in a long time, working as they should - but there is a 25 per cent chance the cancer will come back.

Leo will now head to an appointment on Monday, December 22, to get his stem cell transplant started.

Since his diagnosis, Leo's family have been working with blood cancer charity DKMS to get more people on the stem cell donor



Thumbs up for Leo after a stem cell match has been found. s

register to improve his chances of finding a match and a registration day was held last month.

Jenna, Leo's mum, said: "The donor match is 10/12 - which is fantastic. We don't know who or where that person is from.

"We are so incredibly thankful for everyone who is on, or has registered with DKMS to join the stem cell register - you are literally saving lives, and who knows, one of you could be Leo's match."

Leo will be admitted to the hospital on January 12, where he will isolate for four to six weeks to prepare for the transplant. He will have a 30-minute intense bag of chemo which will completely shut down his immune system.

"This is when Leo will be at his most vulnerable."

Leo will not be allowed any visitors or allowed home throughout this.

Jenna added: "As his mum, I will be staying with him for the whole time by his side like I always do.

"He is, after all, still only 16 and I wouldn't want to be anywhere else - so this also means I will not be allowed home.

"Thank you, everyone, for continuing to support us all through this journey.

"If anything, we want to help spread awareness of how important it is to get registered with DKMS UK so please keep sharing."



Director of music Steve Cowperthwaite and the carol's writer Jenna Plewes with the new piece of music. s



A NEW Christmas carol - written in Bromsgrove - will be performed publicly for the first time at The Nine Lessons and Carols service at 6pm this Sunday, December 21, at St John's Church.

Jenna Plewes has written the words for 'A Place to Call Home' and Steve Cowperthwaite, the church's director of music, has set it to music.

Jenna said: "In this carol I'm seeing an ordinary man with a heavily pregnant wife in an occupied land, ordered to leave home and travel for a census taking.

"I follow them with their newborn baby, fleeing from murderers, living for years as refugees until it's safe to return and find somewhere to settle.

"They find kindness along the way - a very special couple entrusted with Jesus, the saviour of the world - an incredible story I have tried to see through eyes like ours in these turbulent dark times." Steve said he tried to reflect the trudging nature of the holy family's search for a home in the music with a wistful chorus.

"I'm really looking forward to seeing how it works with the wonderful singers of St John's Choir."

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Brass band joins festive singalong

STOURPORT Brass Band will perform its festive extravaganza from 2pm to 4pm tomorrow (Saturday, December 20).

The 'Stourport's Singalong Christmas' is a fun-filled festive family afternoon at The Stourport Civic. As well as the brass band, it will also feature Encore Youth Drama Club, a visit from Father Christmas, stalls, children's activities, a raffle, refreshments and more.

Tickets, which are £10 for adults with under-16s going free, are available at ticketsource.co.uk/stourportsevernbrass band or by calling 01299 823339.

Concert helps charities

A CAROL concert hosted by the Mayor of Kidderminster, Mayor of Bewdley and chairman of Wyre Forest District Council has been hailed a great success.

The event was held at St Mary and All Saints Church.

Kidderminster Town Council thanked representatives of the church and said: "It was a truly lovely service and a fantastic way to celebrate the season together."

"We were also grateful to Wyre Forest Citizens

Advice for delivering an informative talk about the vital services they provide in our community."

Donations at the event were split between a variety of charities. These included Kidderminster and District Youth Trust, Kidderminster Foodbank, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust, Wyre Forest Citizens Advice, The William Mills Foundation, The Emily Jordan Foundation, The Rob Poyson Fund Cardiac Risk in the Young and St Mary and All Saints Church, Kidderminster.



The concert was a joint venture between the Mayor of Kidderminster, Coun Doug Hine, Mayor of Bewdley, Coun Nicole Harper and Wyre Forest District Council chairman, Coun John Byng. Picture by Miriam Cunliffe Photography. s

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MIUs and pharmacies open over holiday times

RESIDENTS across Worcestershire are being urged to ensure they get the right treatment over Christmas.

With local emergency departments facing unprecedented demand, staff at the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care NHS Trust's minor injury units (MIUs) want everyone to be aware of the alternative treatment centres available.

MIUs across Worcestershire are open seven-days-a-week throughout the festive season (including bank holidays). They offer advice and treatment to anyone with a minor injury.

Bromsgrove's MIU at the Princess of Wales Community Hospital is open from 8am to 8pm, while the MIU at Kidderminster Hospital opens from 8am to 10pm.

The minor injury units at Evesham Community Hospital and Malvern Community Hospital open from 9am to 9pm. The one at Tenbury Wells opens from 9am to 5pm every day.

Local pharmacists can also give expert confidential advice, as well as medicines for a range of minor ailments. No appointment is necessary.

Here are the pharmacy times for Worcestershire over the Christmas bank holidays:

Christmas Day

Knights Chemist, Market Street is open from midday to 3pm.

Stewarts Pharmacy, The Chapel, Evesham, is open from 10am to 12pm.

Kidderminster Pharmacy, Stourport Road, Kidderminster, is open between 1pm and 3pm and Areley Kings Pharmacy, Stourport, is available between 10am and 1pm.

In Malvern, Lygon Pharmacy, Worcester Road, is open from 10am to 1pm and Claremont House Pharmacy, Barnards Green Road

from 1pm to 4pm.

Church Green Pharmacy in Redditch is available from 10am to 1pm and Knights, Evesham Road, Crabbs Cross from 1pm to 4pm.

In Worcester, St Peter's Chemist (Tesco), St Peter's Drive is open from 10am to 1pm and Giles Pharmacy in Cranham Drive from 1pm to 4pm.

Boxing Day

Bromsgrove Pharmacy is open from midday to 3pm.

Boots, Evesham Retail Park, is available from

9am to 5pm.

Crest Pharmacy, Linden Road, Kidderminster, is open between 10am and 1pm.

In Malvern, Boots, Enigma Retail Park, is open from 9am to 6pm.

Apollo Pharmacy, William Street, Redditch is available between 10am and 1pm.

Asda, Silver Street, Worcester, is open from 10am to 4pm.

And people, if they are unsure of where to go, can initially contact NHS 111, either online at 111.nhs.uk or by calling 111.

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Chippy's donation helps pantry funds

A DROITWICH fish and chip shop has spread Christmas cheer around the town by donating almost £1,000 to good causes.

by **Ryan Smith**
ryan.smith@bullivantmedia.com

Jaspal Singh, owner of Queens Fish and Chip Bar, has run a community competition through the festive season where customers voted for their favourite local good cause with £500 for the winner.

After a huge public vote, the cash was eventually awarded to Droitwich Community Pantry and Fridge.

However, the huge public response led Jaspal to dip further into his pocket to make further donations of £250 to Moving Forward on Westlands and £125 to The Crafty Cafe.

Jaspal has been a staple in Droitwich for years now, having opened his fish and chip shop on Queen Street in 1994. He believes Christmas

is the time when people and charities struggle the most and wants to help out in his own way and spread some festive cheer.

He ran a similar competition during Covid pandemic and felt that, given the tough times many people were going through, now would be a good time to once again help the community.

He said: "We were genuinely overwhelmed by the response from the community."

"So many people took the time to nominate and vote, which really showed how much support there is locally for these causes."

"I love Droitwich - there is a real spirit and togetherness to it."

"Being able to donate £500 to Droitwich Community Pantry and Fridge, along

with additional donations to Moving Forward on Westlands and The Crafty Cafe, means a lot to us.

"All three charities do incredible work supporting people in Droitwich and especially in the run-up to Christmas - it feels really special to be able to give something back."

"It's definitely helped spread some Christmas cheer around the town, and we're proud to be part of such a caring community."

Jaspal added he was planning to visit the Droitwich Community Pantry Fridge in the new year to see its volunteers at work.

Run by Droitwich CVS, Moving Forward on Westlands runs a community fridge for those living in the area and provides mental wellbeing and support.

The Crafty Cafe offers arts and crafts for all ages to help people with their mental health and wellbeing.

Staff at Queens Fish and Chips get in the charitable mood this Christmas. s



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Let God's light shine through

Christmas message

WHEN light shines through blue glass, it turns blue. Through red, it turns red.

Together in a stained-glass window, they create a beautiful rainbow.

The light has not changed, but the glass transforms how we experience it.

We, too, are like that glass. The way God's light shines through us is unique.

You might be the bright yellow pane and someone else the deep purple one. Together, we make something beautiful.



Rev Ray Khan and wife Caroline. s

and shepherds could have turned away.

But they chose to let the light in, and it shone out into the world.

So, how is your glass looking? Is the light of love and trust shining through? Are you letting others shine in their own unique ways?

The Light of the World came as a fragile baby.

You don't need to be a laser show - just let the light shine through, however small.

Have a most blessed and happy Christmas.

Rev Ray Khan
Vicar, St John's and St Andrews in The Parish of Bromsgrove



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AT THE Barn Green Macular Group's festive get-together, the Cats chorus performed some seasonal songs.

The event was very well-attended by members and Viola, a guide dog puppy, who managed to sit quietly through the singing and hilarity.

She then met the group's members.

This picture was taken during the group's rendition of the classic '12 Days of Christmas'

which was accompanied with appropriate actions.

Wendy Pepper, the Barn Green Macular Society Support Group leader and speaker, said: "Needless to say, not an easy challenge for the visually impaired but enjoyed by all."

The Barn Green Macular Group next meets on Friday, January 30, 2026, when the talk will be 'Hearing and You'.

For more information, call Wendy on 0121 445 1585.

All the hard work pays off as traditional panto takes a bow

BROMSGROVE is lucky to have the talents of local theatre company 'All & Sundry Productions' to bring joy and laughter here for the festive season.

All year long our neighbouring towns have laughed at our never-ending roadworks debates now they can join us at the splendid Cobham Theatre and laugh with us not at us.

A&S Cinderella is directed and produced by Alison Berrisford, ably assisted by choreographer and co-director Martina Ponsonby who together have sprinkled fairy dust over the whole proceedings.

Audiences' expectations get higher every year, they are not cognisant of local budgets and want their share of West End tinsel – well safe to say everyone went home happy.

The script has just the right balance of sauciness and sentimentality with catchy songs a few local jokes for the flavour. The costumes and settings were joyous and so were the special effects

from a glittering Cinderella's coach and horses to magical sparkling enchanted woods.

There is a strong cast of principals supported by excellent senior and junior ensembles and strong dancers including many from 'The Stage Door Academy'.

Melody Hubbard heads up the company in the title role looking and sounding just perfect as Cinderella. Daisy Yarnold pulls it off as Prince Charming and Emma Tarling makes a dapper Dandini.

David Mann is flawless as the hapless Baron Hardup, rich in voice and movement and is well-served by Beth Ralley as his bossy wife the Baroness Hardup. Their 'Anything You Can Do' song is one of the show's highlights. Their kids, the Ugly Sisters, Fartina and Alitosis are a dumb and dastardly delight from Tony Madden and James Ralley.

Special shout out to Neil Lane who brings a laugh every time he enters as a Bromsgovian Fairy Godmother also, to Tristan Harris as Buttons who makes a majestic stage debut as the perfect 'Buttons'. He might not get the girl, but

he certainly gets the audience – no stopping him now – it'll be from Buttons to the Bard.

Other parts included Zena Schtyk as Wallace and director Alison Berrisford stepping in as Grimace, Mikey Lewis as Major Domo and Poppy Ralley as Jenny.

Panto may be fun but it's also very demanding. Putting all the hard work to the test is a daunting first performance debut – this Cinderella a suffered a technical restart which brought out sterling stuff from the All and Sundry troupers – it gained in confidence as the show went on and ended in the triumph, I am sure it will be so for the rest of the run.

Take a bow – in fact take them for the next 10 days – you deserve it.

Cinderella runs at the Cobham Theatre at Bromsgrove School until Tuesday, December 23. Visit: bromsgrove-school.co.uk/whats-on for times, tickets and more information.



James Ralley and David Mann as the ugly sisters Alitosis and Fartina with Standard editor Tristan Harris as Buttons. Picture courtesy of All and Sundry Productions. s

Euan Rose

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Good news just in time for Christmas

AN ABANDONED pregnant husky and her 'Rugrats' pups who ended up at Bromsgrove's Blue Cross have found loving homes in time for Christmas.

Two-year-old Siberian Husky Kimmy came into the rehoming centre on Wildmoor Lane in Catshill, in August with her six pups from the RSPCA after she was found straying.

Caroline Oram, the Bromsgrove Blue Cross' admissions co-ordinator, said: "At first, she was wary, but soon she warmed up to us.

"She is such a loving girl and was a brilliant mum."

The pups were named after the characters in the hit TV cartoon 'The Rugrats' - Lillian, Angelica, Susie, Tommy, Cynthia and Chuckie.

Caroline said: "We're so happy we've been able to find them all loving new homes in time for Christmas."

Kimmy's new owner Marian, who lives in Hampshire, said: "Kimmy has settled exceptionally well in our home thanks to the wonderful work by the guys at Bromsgrove before she came to us.

"We love her so much - she is loving her routine and lets us know when it's time for bed.

"She is growing in confidence each day.

"She is such a lovable, affectionate girl, who loves to play and then snuggle - we're looking forward to spoiling her this Christmas."



Lillian and Chucky - two of the husky pups who now have a home for Christmas. s

The charity needs urgent support so it can help vulnerable homeless pets this Christmas.

People who donate will help provide a 'Critical Care Kit', which contains emergency items tailored to each pet's needs on their first night with the charity. These include pain relief, antibiotics, warm blankets

and nutritious food.

People can support Blue Cross by donating £10, £20 or £30, helping rehoming and veterinary teams provide urgent support to pets in need during their most vulnerable hours.

Visit: bluecross.org.uk/christmasappeal for more information.

This Christmas know that you are loved...

LAST week I found myself dressed as a giant orange at our Christingle service.

Christingle is an old tradition that involves using an orange, adorned with a red band, sweets and a candle, to share the story of Jesus, light of (and in) the world.

I'm sure whoever invented it could not have imagined a human Christingle, but they, like me, would have been pleased to remind people that amidst the darkness of winter, throughout the challenges of life, the baby born in the manger brought light into the world. Our world can feel uncertain, dark even, which can lead us to feel afraid - and fear can sometimes mean we make decisions that do not fully reflect our shared, God-given humanity.

Jesus, light of the world, grew up to take light into the darkest places, to cast out fear, to remind us all who we really are - people whose lives are precious and valuable, who are loved, and who have the ability to love each other.



This Christmas, may you too know that you are loved.

Rev Claire Turner
Vicar of St Chad's Rubery

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Red letter day for the festive runners



Santa is visiting Redditch this Christmas. s



REDDITCH Skip Hire is sprinkling some Christmas magic around the town this year, as Santa takes to the streets of the town with his one-of-a-kind skip-sleigh. Throughout December, on select weekdays between 3pm and 4pm, families and pupils at local primary schools are encouraged to keep their eyes peeled at pick-up time - you never know when Santa might sleigh by.

Father Christmas will be keeping tabs on who has been naughty or nice as he cruises around town, making sure his elves are fully briefed before the big day.

Anyone who spots him is urged to 'give him a big wave'.

Parents are invited to snap photos of Santa on his journey and share the joy with friends, family and Redditch Skip Hire over on Facebook. Simply search 'Redditch Skip Hire'.

Jason Mowatt, general manager at Redditch Skip Hire, said: "Our aim is to bring an extra dash of Christmas cheer to the people of Redditch this year in an unexpected and fun way.

"We're excited to celebrate the festive season with local families and help to facilitate Santa's Redditch adventure."



More than 350 Father Christmases took part in the Santa Fun Run. Picture by Dennis Redmond. s

THERE was a flurry of Father Christmases at Arrow Valley Park in Redditch when the annual Primrose Hospice Santa Fun Run took place.

This year's seasonal fundraiser generated an incredible £15,843 for the charity to help it continue delivering free, essential care and support to people living with life-limiting illnesses and families coping with bereavement throughout 2026.

Jack Taft, Primrose Hospice fundraiser, said: "The Santa Fun Run once again proved to be an extremely popular event this year with a big turn-out."

More than 350 fun runners turned

out to create a great Christmassy spectacle.

On event day, Samba band 'Someone At The Door' with their performance and the Santa Sacks proved extremely popular, adding to the incredible atmosphere.

Jack added: "And we promise new features will be in the works to keep Santa Fun Run fresh and full of surprises to keep participants coming back for more."

Adding to the fun, Father Christmas himself made an appearance, joined by his Snowman helpers from Redditch Round Table and Redditch Stars Running Club, who volunteered as marshals and hosted a cake stall to raise even more for

Primrose.

The Primrose Hospice and Family Support Centre would like to thank to everyone who made this event possible, including all their volunteers and the sponsors John Truslove Chartered Surveyors and Valuers.

Anyone who missed the Santa Fun Run can find other ways of supporting the Primrose Hospice throughout the year.

The next big drive is the Treecycle campaign where people can get their Christmas trees recycled and contribute to the charity's coffers at the same time.

Visit: primrosehospice.org/events/treecycle/ for more information.



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Leah's fab Christmas card design is a winner for MP

BROMSGROVE MP Bradley Thomas has revealed the winner of his first-ever Christmas card design competition.

Hundreds of children across the constituency have been getting into the festive spirit by getting creative and drawing the design for the local MP's Christmas card.

After a lot of deliberation due to the high quality of the designs, Mr Thomas has revealed Leah, aged eight, from Lickey End First School, won this

year's competition.

Her design now features on the front of the MP's Christmas card which has already been sent to hundreds of people.

The runners-up were George, seven from Bromsgrove, and Maia, eight, from Lickey End First School.

Mr Thomas visited Lickey End First School where he presented Leah and Maia with a certificate and a House of Commons Christmas tree decoration.

He said: "After a

sleigh full of entries, it was hard to whittle down the hundreds of excellent designs to find the winner."

He congratulated Leah for her 'very festive design' and thanked the runners-up George and Maia and everyone who took the time to design their entries.

Bromsgrove MP Bradley Thomas with the main design and winner Leah and Maia, one of the runners-up. s



Concert rounds off busy festive time for singers

BARNT Green Choral Society completed its busy Christmas programme with a fine carol concert.

It started with a chamber choir from Barnt Green Choral singing the annual memorial service at Waseley Hills Crematorium on December 9.

The uplifting service was attended by many families bereaved in the last 12 months who grieved and gave thanks for the lives of those they had lost.

Many found great comfort and solace from the singing and the event has now become a regular feature of Barnt Green Choral's calendar.

The choir's main Christmas Concert took place at St Andrew's Church, Barnt Green, on Saturday and was followed by a 'mince pie party' in the Parish Hall.

The church was packed and a really fun, family atmosphere was created by conductor and compere extraordinaire, Steve Cowperthwaite.

The choir sang Christmas



Barnt Green Choral Society's festive programme ended with the Christmas Concert at St Andrew's Church. s

songs in many different styles, ranging from Paul McCartney to John Rutter.

St Andrew's School choir captured the hearts of everyone, and a five-piece wind ensemble demonstrated the power of live instrument playing.

Mr Cowperthwaite said: "The choir excelled themselves and it was so good to have the St Andrews children involved."

One of the band said he really enjoyed playing and labelled the choir 'superb'.

The refreshments team rose to the occasion and its leader Simon joked about writing a book entitled: '101

things you can do with a mince pie'.

The choir's rehearsals restart on January 5 when preparations begin for 'The Armed Man: A Mass for Peace' by Karl Jenkins and 'Song of the Universal' by Ola Gjeilo.

These works will be performed at Artrix on Saturday 28 March 2026.

Visit artrixbromsgrove.co.uk/whats-on and scroll down to book tickets.

Anyone who loves singing and would like to find out more about joining Barnt Green Choral should visit barntgreenchoral.org for more.

Friends & family the greatest gift

Christmas message

AS YOU get older, you realise more and more that the greatest gift of all for Christmas is the time you get to spend with those you love the most.

Time is so precious, and before you know it you blink, and another year has passed.

That's why I always try to appreciate every single second of Christmas.

It's the time of year to come together with your friends and family, to slow down and to enjoy a well-deserved break from work.

It is also a great time to reflect on the past year to and to look ahead to the next one.

We're all so busy with work and our personal lives that it can be easy to forget to stop and appreciate what we've achieved and what we hope to achieve.

I hope you'll be able

to spend time with those you love the most this Christmas. There is no better gift.

Yes, a new watch or phone might be on your wish list, but precious time with friends and family is the most precious gift of all.

From my family to yours, I want to wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy new year.

Bradley Thomas
Bromsgrove MP

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Yuletide brings back some fine track memories

by Neil Gordon
news@bullivantmedia.com

THE TRADITION of not running any passenger trains across Christmas Day and Boxing Day is now established, but this has not always been the case.

There was a time when both passenger and freight trains operated all-year around, including at Christmas, with Bromsgrove being just one place of many that was a hive of activity.

Here, Alan Spencer, who was a fireman on the banking engines at Bromsgrove, recalls working on a busy, and wintry, Christmas Day 1963.

Mr Spencer said: "In the 1960s it was normal to run trains on Christmas and Boxing Day. And, while not all trains ran, several important express trains ran on the north east-south west route through Bromsgrove, with most services still being steam hauled despite the introduction of some diesel locomotives.

"On Wednesday, December 25, 1963, I was rostered on the afternoon shift from 4.05pm with driver Bert Halfpenny. We were allocated BR Standard Class 9F steam engine, number 92223.

"I'd left my home in Redditch that day around 2.45pm to cycle the seven miles to Aston Fields.

"I was 16 years-old and had only joined the railway in the February, aged just 15."

Alan said their first task was to top up the firebox, coal tender and water tank on 92223, before a Bristol to Sheffield passenger service arrived at 4.32pm.

"That train comprised 12 coaches and was being hauled by Jubilee locomotive number 45676, named Codrington.

"We banked this up the Incline to Blackwell in quite heavy snow.

"Once Bert and I got back down to Bromsgrove depot, known as 85D, I called in at the south signal box to see Ted Mason, the signaller, who was, as usual, knitting.

"Ted had shown me how to work the instruments and levers in the box and I took the opportunity to set the road for a down express under Ted's guidance, while he continued to knit."

Mr Spencer told how Ted then made enquiries to see which other trains were due through Bromsgrove later on, and would need banking.

"We were informed there was a Cardiff to Leeds and Bradford passenger, a Bristol to Newcastle mail and a relief mail to Derby.

"Also, there were two banana special freight trains from Avonmouth Docks in Bristol, both going to Water Orton.

"I returned to the mess room from the signal box for a cup of tea and some turkey sandwiches, which Bert's wife had made.

"There was no TV to watch, so we played cribbage, which Bert had taught me."

It then began to get busy for Alan and Bert, just as the weather deteriorated.



Fireman Alan Spencer spent Christmas Day 1963 banking trains up the Lickey Incline on Standard Class 9F, number 92223, with driver Bert Halfpenny. s

"The Leeds and Bradford service arrived at 7.30pm, comprising 12 coaches hauled by Jubilee 44818."

Alan said: "We banked this train up the Incline during a blizzard. Then, at 9.25pm the Newcastle mail arrived comprising 14 coaches (622tonnes) of which three coaches were TPOs (Travelling Post Office).

"It had now stopped snowing but there were several inches covering the ground, which concerned me as to how I would cycle back home.

"At 10.15pm the relief mail arrived with another Jubilee, number 45584, hauling 11 coaches (465 tonnes) which we assisted.

"Once back in our messroom the 'phone rang as we settled down to play cribbage again. It was the British Rail telephone exchange at Gloucester saying my parents had phoned and that my stepfather, Ted, was hoping to collect me around midnight."

Today, 78-year-old Mr Spencer works from home as a duty control manager for a parcel distribution train company and has had a railway career spanning 62 years.

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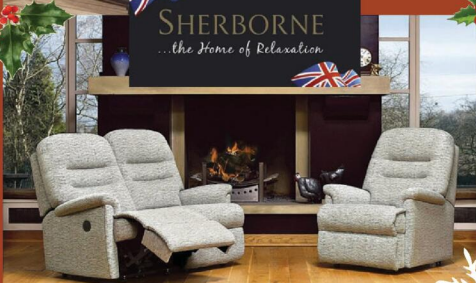
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Latest superstore opens its doors

A NEW Aldi store in Pershore opened its doors to customers last Thursday (December 11), with Team GB trampoliner hero Bryony Page cutting the all-important red ribbon alongside school children from Holy Redeemer Primary.

The Pershore supermarket is the first Aldi to open in the area and will be run by James Normington, along with a team of 21 colleagues from the local community.

Gold medallist Bryony gave away complimentary bags of fresh fruit and vegetables to the first 30 customers and afterwards visited Holy Redeemer to give a school assembly as part of Aldi's Get Set to Eat Fresh programme.

The scheme has already inspired over two and a half million school children aged five to 14 to learn more about the benefits of cooking fresh, healthy food with their families.

"It was an honour to officially open the store and welcome customers inside for the first time.

"It was great to speak with the children at Holy Redeemer Primary School about the importance of eating healthily and how it can be fun to plan and prepare meals as a family. Hopefully I've also managed to inspire the pupils to keep active and try different sports," she said.

Store manager James Normington added: "It's been a wonderful morning here at the opening of Aldi Pershore. It was lovely to



welcome our new customers into the store, and I look forward to meeting more of the community in the coming weeks.

"I'm also thrilled that we've been able to support Holy Redeemer Primary School through our partnership with Team GB."

Additionally, the new Aldi store is calling on local charities and food banks in Pershore to register with Neighbourly, a community engagement platform that links businesses to charitable organisations in the local community. Local charities that register will be able to collect surplus food and perishable products, such as fruit, vegetables and baked goods, seven days a week. Email aldi@neighbourly.com to get involved.

Team GB gymnast Bryony Page and store manager James Normington open the store with help from Kevin the Carrot and pupils from the Holy Redeemer school. Picture by Adam Fradgley



The Arden Hotel has donated £400 to Stratford-upon-Avon Food Bank.

Festive boost for foodbank

STRATFORD Foodbank has been given a festive funding boost thanks to a town hotel.

The foodbank, based at The Fred Winter Centre on Guild Street, has received a £400 donation from The Arden Hotel.

The foodbank has handed out more than 4500 food parcels so far this year, with over a third of these going to children.

Isla Stroyan, from Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank, said: "We are so thankful that The Arden Hotel has supported our work again this year. With our Christmas goodie bags, we expect to feed around 2000 people this Christmas, and

so every donation we receive makes a real difference to families in our town."

The Arden Hotel made the gesture after donating £10 from each hotel room sale from its Christmas package.

Sai Nathan, general manager at The Arden Hotel, added: "We are aware of the important role that Stratford-upon-Avon Foodbank plays in supporting those in our local community, and as Christmas is often a time when support services such as foodbanks see a spike in demand, we wanted to do our bit to help them fund additional items."

We wish all our customers a merry Christmas and a happy new year!

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Join us at your local church this Christmas...

**St Leonards CofE, Church Hill, Frankley,
B32 4BL / 0121 4753484**

Christmas Eve

5pm - Christingle and Nativity Service

9pm - First Communion of Christmas

Christmas Day

10am - Christmas Day Eucharist

**Beacon Church Centre URC, Whetty Lane,
Rubery, B45 9DL / 07526 250645**

Christmas Eve

11.30pm - Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

10.30am - Christmas Day Worship

**Holy Trinity CofE, Rose Hill, Lickey, B45 8RR
with**

**St Catherine's CofE, St Catherine's Rd,
Blackwell B60 1BN / 0121 445 1425**

Christmas Eve

10am - Holy Communion at Holy Trinity

3pm - Christingle at Holy Trinity

4:30pm - Christingle service at St Catherine's

Christmas Day

10am - Christmas Communion at St Catherine's

10am - Christmas Celebration at Holy Trinity

**St Stephen's CofE, Edgewood Road, Rednal,
B45 8SG / 0121 243 4634**

Christmas Eve

3:30pm - Family friendly Crib Service

11.30pm - First Mass of Christmas

Christmas Day

10.30am - Christmas Day Service

**Longbridge Methodist Church, Bristol Rd
South, B45 9TY / 0121 257 2584**

Christmas Eve

11.15pm - Midnight Communion

Christmas Day

11am - Christmas Day Service

**St Chad's CofE, New Road, Rubery, B45 9JA /
07748 998227**

Christmas Eve

4.30pm - Family Crib Service

11pm - Midnight Eucharist

Christmas Day

10am - Fun-filled Family Eucharist

**St Andrew's CofE, Sandhills Road, Barnt
Green, B45 8NR with**

**St Michael's CofE, Cofton Church Lane, Cofton
Hackett, B45 8PT / 0121 447 7097**

Christmas Eve

3pm - Crib Service at St Andrew's

4:30pm - Family Carol Service at St Andrew's

6:30pm - Carols by candlelight at St Andrew's

11pm - Midnight Communion at St Michael's

Christmas Day

9:30am - Informal Christmas Communion at St

Andrew's

**Our Lady's RC, Leach Green Lane, Rubery,
B45 9BQ / 0121 453 3452**

Christmas Eve

9.00pm - 'Midnight' Mass with Carols

Christmas Day

11.15am - Christmas Day Mass

**We will also be gathering for 'Beer and Carols' (other drinks are available!) at the
Hawthorns Social Club at 7.30pm on Friday 19th December -
you buy a drink, we provide the carols!**

**The New Frankley Gathering is also offering an opportunity to seek light in the darkness on
Sunday 21st December from 10am - 12pm at 4 Arden Road, Frankley B45 0JA and are
hosting carols around the tree outside the Arden Road Shops in Frankley from 4pm on
Tuesday 23rd December.**

Special Feature

Keep calm and join the festive fun

CAORL concerts, nativities, meeting friends, days out, decorating the house, baking.

Christmas is a time when at times it can all feel a bit much and contrary to the infamous does not feel like 'the most wonderful time of the year'.

Christmas isn't always the magical, stress-free wonderland we see in adverts.

Between shopping for gifts, cooking for a crowd, hosting family, and juggling work deadlines, the festive season can feel more like a marathon than a holiday.

If you're feeling the pressure, don't worry—you're not alone.

Here are some practical, down-to-earth tips to help you stay calm, enjoy the season and not dip into the Christmas chocolates early.

Forget Perfect—Aim for Happy

We all want that Instagram-worthy Christmas, but real life is messy. Burnt cookies? Late parcels? A tree that leans slightly to the left? It happens.

The truth is, nobody remembers if the napkins matched the baubles—they remember laughter, good company, and those little moments that make the season special. So ditch the idea of perfection and focus on what really matters.



Keep Your Wallet Happy

Overspending is one of the fastest ways to turn Christmas stress into January blues.

Set a budget and stick to it. Homemade gifts, Secret Santa exchanges, or potluck dinners can cut costs without cutting fun. Remember, the best memories

don't come with a price tag—they come from shared experiences.

Don't Forget You

Amid the chaos, take care of yourself. Sleep well, eat something green (not just sprouts or pistachio chocolates!), and get outside for a walk. Feeling frazzled? Pause, breathe, and reset. Even five min-

utes of quiet can make a difference. A calm you is the best gift you can give your family.

Learn the Power of 'No'

Christmas invites and obligations can pile up quickly. It's okay to say no. Choose the events that make you smile and politely decline the rest. Quality beats quantity every

time. You don't need to attend every party or bake every cake—sometimes less really is more.

Share the Load

Christmas isn't a one-person show. Rope in family or friends—whether it's cooking, decorating, or wrapping gifts.

Most people are happy to help, and teamwork makes the tinsel sparkle. If you're hosting, don't be afraid to ask guests to bring a dish or help with clearing up.

And get the children involved, even though the job make take twenty-times as long, they enjoy offering a helping hand and it's always nice to teach them new skills or just have a bit of time with them where six-seven isn't involved.

Embrace the Little Things

The magic of Christmas isn't in the big gestures—it's in the small moments.

A cup of hot chocolate after a long day.

A silly Christmas film on the sofa. Singing carols off-key with the kids. These are the things you'll remember, not whether the turkey was Instagram-worthy.

No one remembers if the biscuits were burnt - they remember making a mess and having fun. Image by Jill Wellington from Pixabay



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A history of Panto (oh yes it is)



NOT MANY people know that the roots to the traditional pantomime we know today lie in ancient Greece and Rome and date back hundreds of years.

The shows we enjoy over the festive season combine music, slapstick comedy, plenty of one-liners, dance, and audience participation.

Early forms of pantomime emerged in Roman entertainment as wordless storytelling through expressive gestures, often performed alongside music.

This tradition waned with the fall of the Roman Empire but saw a revival during the Italian Renaissance in the 16th century through commedia dell'arte, a theatrical tradition featuring stock characters, improvisation, and physical comedy.

British pantomime

By the 18th century, pantomime evolved into a distinctly British art form. Influenced by Italian commedia and French mime traditions, English pantos blended these with local folk tales and Christmas traditions. John Rich, an early innovator, introduced Harlequinade, a comic performance featuring Harlequin and Columbine, laying the groundwork for modern pantomime.

In the Victorian era, pantomime gained popularity as a Christmas entertainment for families, incorporating fairy tales, music hall comedy, and cross-

dressings, with men playing 'dames' and women often portraying principal boys. Audience participation became a hallmark, with frequent call-and-response interactions.

Modern pantomime, performed primarily in the UK, retains its traditional roots while embracing contemporary elements like pop music and topical humor.

It remains a festive spectacle filled with exaggerated characters, magical settings, and humor for all ages, keeping its centuries-old legacy alive.

Pantomime today

Pantomimes, or 'pantos', are still a cherished British Christmas tradition today, blending comedy, music, and audience participation.

These family-friendly shows bring classic fairytales, such as Cinderella, Aladdin and Jack and the Beanstalk to life, often with a modern twist. Featuring exaggerated characters, slapstick humour, and topical jokes, pantos are as much about the experience as the story.

The 'he's behind you' and 'oh yes it is', 'oh no it isn't' lines are still balled out by audiences across the country.

Today, pantomimes remain vital to British theatre, often generating the highest ticket sales of the year. They feature a mix of seasoned actors and celebrities, from reality TV stars to beloved comedians, boosting their appeal. Spectacular sets, dazzling costumes, and special effects make modern pantos visual extravaganzas.

The biggest pantomimes are staged in large venues, like the London Palladium and Birmingham Hippodrome, where productions draw thousands. The Palladium's panto, starring a star-studded cast, is often considered the pinnacle of festive theatre. Similarly, regional theatres across the UK rely on pantos to fund other productions throughout the year, underscoring their economic importance.

Pantomimes continue to bring communities together, preserving a unique blend of tradition, humor, and holiday magic. And there will be plenty of pantomimes to catch in your local area.

Here are the top ten pantomimes in the UK

1. Cinderella – Often referred to as the 'jewel of pantomimes', Cinderella is a perennial favourite, filled with romance, magic, and the hilarious antics of the Ugly Sisters.
2. Aladdin – A tale of adventure and wishes, Aladdin delights audiences with its flying carpets, magical genies, and comedic characters like Widow Twankey.
3. Peter Pan – The boy who never grows up takes audiences on a journey to Neverland, complete with Captain Hook, Tinker Bell, and plenty of swashbuckling.
4. Jack and the Beanstalk – This giant-slaying adventure brings laughter and suspense with a magical beanstalk and a lovable cow.
5. Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs – This fairytale comes to life with comedy from the dwarfs



Cinderella is the number one panto in the UK - s

and the ever-evil Queen, alongside a classic love story.

6. Beauty and the Beast – Combining romance and comedy, Beauty and the Beast is a visually stunning show with a heartwarming message.

7. Sleeping Beauty – With its magical fairies and a wicked villain, this story is a family favorite featuring lots of laughs and a heroic prince.

8. Dick Whittington – A London-based tale of ambition and adventure, Dick Whittington features a heroic rat-catching cat.

9. Goldilocks and the Three Bears – This circus-themed panto is a lesser-known gem, filled with laughs, songs, and thrilling acrobatics.

10. Robin Hood – A swashbuckling tale of good versus evil, Robin Hood features sword fights, archery, and plenty of comedy.

These pantomimes continue to captivate audiences across the UK, blending tradition, humor, and festive magic.

So, if you have not already, why not go and support your local pantomime?

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Brits strangest gifts revealed



A BLOW-up boyfriend, a single sock and a potato with the recipient's name on it have been revealed among some of the UK's strangest Christmas gifts.

A new nationwide study commissioned by blood cancer charity Leukaemia Care has revealed that many Brits are rethinking the way they give gifts at Christmas – especially at the last minute.

Around half of the 2,000 surveyed admit they regularly re-gift unwanted presents, and more than a third say they would rather donate to charity than buy a token gift.

The research, released to launch Leukaemia Care's winter appeal 'The Unseen Gift', uncovers the scale of waste and pressure surrounding festive giving in the UK.

Almost a quarter of people say they receive up to two gifts each Christmas that they don't actually want, and a similar proportion choose to donate unwanted presents to charity.

Over 60 per cent admit to buying last-minute panic gifts just for the sake of having something to give, and almost half feel pressured to spend more than they can afford at Christmas.

When asked about the strangest or most unwanted presents they've ever received, respondents revealed that things can go very wrong.

Among the most common were single socks, toiletries, cheap novelty mugs, soap, stationery, and ill-fitting clothing – with many admitting they'd been handed something that had clearly been re-gifted or



chosen in a last-minute panic.

But some answers took a much quirkier turn. People reported being given everything from a potato with their name written on it to a brick, a concrete rabbit, a Viking necklace,

and even a sign for a cheese shop.

A surprising number mentioned risqué gadgets, including a 'blow-up boyfriend' and a 'ladybird battery massager'. Others recalled gifts that were just plain bizarre, such as

a cable wire, a home-made fort (as an adult), or a custom bobblehead of their boss.

Together, the stories paint a picture of well-meant generosity gone hilariously wrong, and underline

how much money is wasted each year on presents no one really wants.

Leukaemia Care's The Unseen Gift campaign encourages people to give differently by donating in someone's name to support those affected by blood cancer, instead of buying an unwanted or unnecessary present.

Colin Dyer, chief executive of Leukaemia Care, said: "Every year, millions of pounds are spent on gifts that end up forgotten, re-gifted or in the bin.

"The Unseen Gift is about turning that waste into something truly meaningful, a gift that could help save a life, support patients and advise families how best to navigate what can be a difficult time together.

"We know people want to show they care, but this research shows many of us are tired of the pressure and the excess. By giving an unseen gift, you're still giving - but in a way that makes a lasting difference.

"We all want Christmas to feel special, but sometimes the most powerful gifts are the ones you can't wrap. Supporting someone through a diagnosis, funding a helpline call, or helping us reach another family in need - those are gifts that truly matter."

The charity hopes the campaign will inspire people to rethink how they give, and remind them that even small, thoughtful acts can make a tangible impact.

Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk/theunseengift to leave an unseen gift.



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Stratford care home gets a makeover



A Stratford care home has been given a new lease of life, thanks to a major refurbishment and development programme.

The Limes, a 31-bedroom home on Alcester Road run by local charity WCS Care, has added a café, outdoor patio and hair salon, and several ensuite have also been upgraded to wetrooms to support comfort and independence.

Set in quiet, private grounds near the town centre and train station, The Limes supports both privately and socially funded residents.

Supporting wellbeing every day

WCS Care's aim is simple – that every day is well lived.

At The Limes, this includes regular activities and trips out in the Memory Maker minibus, helping residents and families revisit familiar places and make new memories.

Music is a big part of life too, with regular sessions from WCS Care's dedicated community musicians. Research shows music can help reduce

pain and anxiety, support speech and memory loss, and even improve balance and appetite. It also helps families connect with loved ones.

Sleeping well at night

In many care homes, night checks disturb sleep. Staff often open doors every one or two hours, which can leave people feeling tired the next day.

At The Limes, a night-time acoustic monitoring system offers a quieter approach. Used with consent, it listens for unusual sounds like someone calling out or moving and alerts staff who respond straightaway. Sleeping residents are left undisturbed.

This system has been shown to reduce falls and improve wellbeing. People who sleep better are more alert, steadier during the day, and often eat and drink better too.

The Limes is currently the only home in Stratford-upon-Avon using this

technology – another way WCS Care supports people's dignity and comfort.

A consistent and caring team

The home benefits from a long-standing, dedicated team who were recently recognised with Investors in People Platinum – an accreditation achieved by just 5% of accredited organisations.

Manager Karen Hall has been with WCS Care for over 20 years.

'I'm incredibly proud to be the manager here,' says Karen. 'The Limes has a real family feel. Our small lounges and dining rooms help people connect. The café and hair salon have brought something new to daily life and we're already planning lots of social events to welcome the community into our home.'



New café



New hair salon



Karen Hall
Care Home Manager

Questions about care? We can help



“With over 30 years’ experience, we can help you navigate the process of finding the right care home, so that you feel confident about the decision you make – whether that’s choosing a WCS care home, or one outside our group that’s more suited to your needs.”



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What's the best present you can give yourself this Christmas?



Picture by Swloczyk2 from Pixabay

THERE is so much to love about the journey into winter. In the Northern Hemisphere, cold lashing rain might be the reality, but there are so many ways you can spin the next few months so they feel like a delight for the senses rather than a drain on your reserves. How? We need to take our lead from the Scandinavians, who have the joys of this entire season rolled into one gorgeous concept - Hygge.

What is Hygge?

Hygge (pronounced 'hoo-gah') is a Danish/Norwegian word that's all about creating a warm, cosy atmosphere. It's all about slowing down and enjoying the simple pleasures in life.

So, how can you bring more hygge into your life this season? Hygge doesn't have to be complicated. In fact, much of its beauty lies in the simplicity of it.

Here are 10 simple ways to introduce hygge into your life this winter

1. Cosy space. Add some soft lighting, blankets, and pillows to your living room or bedroom. It doesn't take much, but it can completely change the feel of a space.
2. Warming drinks. There's something incredibly comforting about holding a warm mug in your hands. Herbal teas, a healthy hot chocolate, or even a simple cup of warm milk are perfect for chilly evenings.
3. Candles everywhere. Lighting a candle in the evening can create

- a lovely, relaxing atmosphere. The soft, flickering light works wonders for calming the mind.
4. Comfort food. It's that time of year when hearty soups, slow-cooked stews, or a warm bowl of porridge is on the menu. Simple, nourishing meals are the ultimate in comfort and are perfect for the colder months.
5. Digital detox. Try switching off from screens for an hour or two in the evening. Without the constant buzz of notifications, you'll be able to unwind and relax much more easily.
6. Snuggle up with a book. There's something beautifully hygge

- about curling up with a good book. It's a simple pleasure that can bring a lot of joy.
7. Connect with loved ones. Hygge is all about togetherness, so make time to catch up with friends or family. Whether it's in person or over a video call, those connections are so important for your wellbeing.
8. Mindful moments. Hygge encourages us to be present and appreciate the little things. For you, that might mean savouring a cup of tea or watching the rain outside, take a few moments each day to just *be*.
9. Woolly socks and comfy clothes.

There's nothing better than changing into something cosy at the end of the day. Consider this your sign to yourself to some soft, cashmere socks or a warm jumper.

10. Winter walks. Although it might well be freezing outside, there's no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing... Even on the coldest days, there's something refreshing about being out in nature.

Remember, it's okay to slow down and take time for yourself, especially as the holidays approach. Hygge is a reminder that self-care isn't selfish - it's necessary.

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Celebrate the New Year at Droitwich's award-winning Vasaanti restaurant

AS SOON as Christmas has passed, thoughts turn to New Year's Eve, which is now only 12 days away.

The ever-popular award-winning Vasaanti restaurant in Droitwich is now taking bookings for one of three sittings on December 31.



Akbar Miah - Owner

These popular sittings will take place from 5pm to 7pm, 7.15pm to 9.15pm and 9.30pm to 11pm and people are being urged to book now to avoid disappointment. **£10 cash deposit required per person.** As well as a variety of mouthwatering meals to choose from, including appetisers, starters, main courses, sundry items and desserts, after your meal, you will have plenty of time to get to where you plan to be to welcome in 2026.

Alternatively, you could have a takeaway delivered or cooked up to pick up.

The Vasaanti is opening everyday, seven days-a-week, throughout the festive season, so people can enjoy a get-together with family or friends.

Akbar Miah, known as Aki, took over the restaurant from his brother more than three years ago after a successful 17 years at India Spice in Bromsgrove. And since then, it has gone from strength-to-strength with Aki and his team, including manager Alamin Miah who recently received the IBM Young Entrepreneur Award 2025 in recognition of his hard work, leadership and passion for excellence.

There is also the famous Basel and the other friendly, welcoming, experienced and knowledgeable staff who are all ready to welcome you throughout the festive season so you can enjoy the very best in British Indian dining.

After already having plenty of customers journeying to the eatery from the surrounding areas since he took over, Aki is looking forward to seeing many familiar faces from Bromsgrove, Kidderminster, Worcester, Stourbridge and even further afield.

Or, if you cannot make it to the popular restaurant, there is always the option to have the mouthwatering meals The Vasaanti has become famous for delivered as a takeaway.

The Vasaanti has won a multitude of accolades, including - the '2025 Restaurant of the Year in Worcestershire' in the Master Chef Promotions Business Hospitality and Excellent Awards. That followed The Vasaanti winning the 'Best Restaurant in Worcestershire' at the TMiCA Awards the year below and amidst hundreds of excellent reviews on Google and TripAdvisor.

So, why not book yourself and friends or family a table and give yourself a real culinary treat for New Year's Eve or during the rest of the festive season?

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Special Feature

A right Royal Christmas tradition



FROM PRESENTS to puddings, many of today's favourite Christmas traditions were popularised by Queen Victoria and the royal family in the 19th century.

Several of the traditions still

loved today are rooted in Germanic heritage thanks to Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert. The prince, who moved to England to marry the queen, embraced his childhood traditions and introduced them to his family.

In the early years of Victoria's reign, the royal family celebrated Christmas at Windsor Castle. However after Albert's death in

1861, the queen began celebrating the festive season at Osborne, their holiday home on the Isle of Wight.

Continuing these festive traditions after his death was a tangible way of keeping Albert's memory alive. It also inspired a nation and these customs began to be seen in the private homes of Victorian England.

Decorating Christmas Trees

Decorating trees at Christmas was a festive activity popularised by Prince Albert. Inspired by his heritage, trees in the royal household were adorned with lit candles and trinkets and the interiors filled with evergreen decorations.

But Victoria and Albert weren't the first royals to put up what is known today as a Christmas tree. George III married Queen Charlotte who, like Albert, was raised in Germany. Charlotte is credited with bringing decorated evergreen trees to England when she introduced their first Christmas tree at Queen's Lodge, Windsor, in 1800.

Victoria and Albert are so closely linked to the tradition because they were famously illustrated standing beside a decorated tree with their children. The engraving was published in the press in the 1840s and it quickly took hold of the national imagination.

Turkey or festive bird for dinner

Victoria and Albert enjoyed turkey at Christmas. They would sit together as a family for their main meal and enjoy turkey with all the trimmings. Later they might indulge in a plum pudding.

Naturally finances influenced what families put on their Christmas tables, and the majority of people in Victorian England were not wealthy. Where possible a festive bird remained central to a family dinner and for many this would have meant a goose, like Charles Dickens illustrates in A Christmas Carol. Some even joined a goose club so they could pay in instalments throughout the year.

Giving gifts

Giving gifts at Christmas wasn't a tradition the Victorians introduced, but they certainly made it a part of their family festivities. Presents were shared on the evening of Christmas Eve, rather than Christmas Day as is traditional in the 21st century.

In the royal household Queen Victoria insisted unwrapped presents be spread out across tables, as they did with royal birthdays. There are references in the queen's diaries about the gifts she gave and received at this time. Victoria and Albert famously gave

each other jewellery, works of art, sculptures, paintings. Often the children and grandchildren would give the queen things that they would have made themselves like paintings, embroidery or handicrafts.

Poorer Victorians would have been forced to live within their means. Elaborate tables filled with gifts may not have been adopted by a more modest Victorian family, but the concept of sharing gifts was a part of the annual celebrations.

Plum pudding

Christmas puddings featured regularly on the royal dessert menu at Osborne, and are again referenced by Dickens as a treat enjoyed by regular Victorians. It was often served with a kind of sauce, perhaps an English custard or creme anglaise. But while a staple on the Victorian Christmas table, the humble pudding began as a pottage in the Medieval period.

Today brandy custard is a popular addition to the Christmas table and in a similar way to lighting modern puddings, Victoria and her family enjoyed a similar activity involving this ingredient, albeit with a slightly dangerous twist. They would set fire to a bowl of raisins soaked in some sort of alcohol and the aim was to extract as many raisins as possible from the bowl.



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DEATHS

O'CONNELL Anthony

Died on 26th November 2025
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The funeral has
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NORMAN Pamela Dorothy

Aged 102 years

Widow of Denis Charles Norman, dearly
loved Mother to Elizabeth and Nicholas.

Pamela will be sadly missed by all her family
and friends and the wider community.

The funeral service for Pamela will take place
at Redditch Crematorium on
Friday 9th January 2026 at 2.00 pm.

Family flowers only please, donations if so
desired to Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

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DEATHS

'YOGI'

Michael John Horgan

Aged 75 years.

Passed away peacefully on
Friday 12th December, 2025.

Much loved by Jan and all of his family and
friends.

A service to celebrate Mick's life will take
place at Redditch Crematorium on
Tuesday 13th January 2026 at 11.00 a.m.

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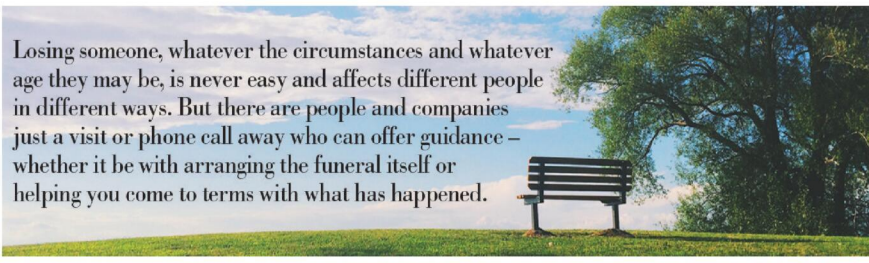
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PUBLIC NOTICES

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council has made the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

ASHORNE ROAD, ASHORNE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Works to replace telegraph poles.
Order Commences: 22 December 2025 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 22 December 2025.
Access & Diversion: Ashorne Road, Broms Hill, Banbury Road, Moreton Morrell Road, Ashorne Hill and vice versa.
Contractor: Sunbelt Rentals Ltd, Tel: 03700 500 792.

Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

PUBLIC FOOTPATH SD207 IN THE PARISH OF HENLEY IN ADEEN
Order Effect: Footpath closed to all traffic between Grid References SP1532465978 and SP1538565953.

Reason for Order: To avoid the likelihood of danger to the public because of the excavation works on or near the path.
Order Commences: 5 January 2026 for up to 6 months.
Access & Diversion: No diversion route available.
Contractor: WCC County Highways Street Lighting, Tel: 01926 412 459.

C76 WOOD STREET, STRATFORD UPON AVON

Order Effect: A One-Way Traffic flow in an easterly direction will be imposed between High Street/Bridge Street roundabout and Meer Street – closed to westbound traffic.

Reason for Order: Footway reconstruction and associated works.
Order Commences: 5 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: One-way diversion: High Street, Chapel Street, Church Street, Chestnut Walk, Rother Street and Wood Street.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

CLOPTON LANE, MICKLETON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable duct laying works.
Order Commences: 9 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 19 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Colemans Hill, Meon Hill, Admington Road, Main Street, Back Lane, Goose Lane, Tailors Lane, Campden Road, Stratford Road and vice versa.
Contractor: BethMar Ltd, Tel: 07736 993 275.

C74 SAWBRIDGE ROAD, LOWER SHUCKBURGH

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic from A425 Shuckburgh Road to Flecknoe Station Road.
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs-16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 8 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 8 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: C74 Sawbridge Road, C74 Willoughby Road, C74 Sawbridge Road, C74 Moor Lane, C74 Main Street, A45 London Road, A45 Daventry Road, B4429 Daventry Road, A426 Southam Road, A426 Rugby Road, A426 Southam Road, A423 Southam Bypass, A425 Daventry Road, A425 Shuckburgh Road, and vice versa.
Contractor: C R Macdonalds Ltd, Tel: 01527 518 989.

BROOKHAMPTON LANE, KINETON

Order Effect: Road Closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable exploratory works prior to pipe installation.

Order Commences: 9 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 11 January 2026

Access & Diversion: No diversion available
Contractor: Sunbelt TM, Tel: 01543 375 121.

DARLINGCOTT ROAD, TREDINGTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable telegraph replacement works, 09.30-15.30hrs.

Order Commences: 6 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 6 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Darlingscott Road, Darlingscott Road, Campden Road, Norgren Crescent, Fosse Way and vice versa.
Contractor: Sunbelt Rentals, Tel: 08700 500 792.

C72 BRIDGE STREET, WELLESBOURNE

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between its junctions with Church Street/School Street and Chapel Street.

Reason for Order: Footway reconstruction and associated works, 09.30hrs-15.30hrs, weekdays only.

Order Commences: 5 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 16 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Clockwise: Bridge Street, Stratford Road, A429, B4086 (Charleotte Road, Warwick Road), Anti-clockwise: B4086 (Church Street, Warwick Road, Charleotte Road), A429, Stratford Road, Bridge Street.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

STRATFORD ROAD, HAMPTON LUCY

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable works for installation of a new pressure relief valve.

Order Commences: 5 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 13 March 2026.

Access & Diversion: Stratford Road, Warwick Road, Hatton Bank Lane, Snitterfield Road, Snitterfield Street, Bridge Street, Vine Cottages, Church Street and vice versa.
Contractor: Sunbelt Tm, Tel: 01543 375 121.

STRATFORD ROAD, WOOTTON WAWEN

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable works for servicing of pressure relief valve.

Order Commences: 8 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 9 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Stratford Road, New Road, Henley Road, Hunger Hill, Oldberrow Lane, Oldberrow Road, Redditch Road, Birmingham Road, Priory Square, Alcester Road, Haydon Way, Coughton Hill, Willoughby Close, Alcester Bypass, A46, Bearley Cross and vice versa.
Contractor: Chevron Tm Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

COMMON LANE, CLAVERDON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Works to install new ducting.

Order Commences: 6 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 8 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Common Lane, Lye Green, Lye Green Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Sunbelt Rentals Ltd, Tel: 03700 500 792.

NEW ROAD, ALDERMINSTER

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Works to replace a telegraph pole, closed 08.00hrs-18.00hrs.

Order Commences: 9 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 9 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: New Road, Banbury Road, Stratford Road, Halford Road, Old Halford Road, Fosse Way, Shipston Road, Old Road and vice versa.
Contractor: Go Traffic Management, Tel: 01613 515 370.

D6089 JUSTINS AVENUE, STRATFORD UPON AVON

Order Effect: Road closed between A3400 Birmingham Road and Clopton Road.
Reason for Order: Carriageway patching works, closed 08.00hrs -16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 9 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 9 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Clopton Road, A3400 Birmingham Road, and vice versa.

Vehicular access & egress will be maintained where possible and safe to do so for businesses and residents only.
Access/egress to/from Hodgson Road, Maple Grove, Woodlands Road, Elm Road via Justins Avenue may also be restricted whilst works are in progress.

Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

D5344 MILL LANE, ASTON CANTLOW

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic between its junctions with Brook Road/Wilmcote Lane and Wood Lane.

Reason for Order: Carriageway patching and associated works, 08.00hrs-16.00hrs.

Order Commences: 10 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 10 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Wilmcote Lane, Wood Lane and vice versa.
Contractor: Balfour Beatty, Tel: 03452 415 302.

BURFORD LANE, ASTON CANTLOW

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: Works to renew water meter.

Order Commences: 5 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 7 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Burford Lane, Alcester Road, Henley Road, Village Road, Aine End, Spermall Lane, Spermall Lane and vice versa.
Contractor: Chevron Traffic Management Ltd, Tel: 03300 080 820.

NUTHURST ROAD, BEAUDESERT

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To safely enable works to install new water connection.

Order Commences: 7 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 9 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Nuthurst Road, Bushwood Lane, Liveridge Hill and vice versa.
Contractor: Network Plus, Tel: 01332 820 920.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 19 Dec 2025

PUBLIC NOTICES

Warwickshire County Council

ROAD TRAFFIC REGULATION ACT 1984

Warwickshire County Council proposes to make the following Temporary Traffic Orders:

SAMBOURNE LANE, COUGHTON

Order Effect: Road closed to vehicular traffic.
Reason for Order: To enable works for the repair/ replacement of a manhole cover and frame.
Order Commences: 8 January 2026 for up to 18 months.
Anticipated Completion: 8 January 2026.

Access & Diversion: Sambourne Lane, Wike Lane, The Green, Middleton Lane, Bromsgrove Road, Alcester Road, Birmingham Road, Haydon Way, Coughton Hill and vice versa.
Contractor: Customer Solutions Plus, Tel: 07918 298 599.

For all of the above temporary orders, pedestrian access to and egress from properties and land situated adjacent to the length of road to be closed will be maintained at all times. Vehicular access will be maintained where possible.

To report any problems with these works or for further details of our current & planned roadworks visit our website warwickshire.gov.uk/roadworksmap or call us 01926 412515.

S Duxbury, Director of Strategy, Planning & Governance, Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL Date 19 Dec 2025

PUBLIC NOTICES

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL & REDDITCH BOROUGH COUNCIL

Advertisement Key: ADVSTD = Wider Publicity, MAJ = Major Development.

25/01337/REM ADVSTD MAJ Site: Land Adjacent, Perryfields Road, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire

Proposal: Reserved Matters Application for Phase 2C: 104 affordable residential units (Class C3), within Phase 2 east of Perryfields Road and south of The Orchard School, in accordance with the Outline Planning Permission for 1,300 dwellings (application reference 16/0335) allowed at appeal under reference APP/P1805/W/20/3265948. The Reserved Matters application seeks consent in line with condition 1 for detailed matters of appearance, landscaping, layout, and scale.

Application forms and plans may be inspected online <https://publicaccess.bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk/online-applications>

Comments can be submitted online, via email to webplan@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk or in writing Planning Services, Redditch Town Hall, Walter Stranz Square, Redditch, B98 8AH

Comments should be made within 17 days of the date of this publication. The Council does not acknowledge comments but will make these available for inspection online.

PUBLIC NOTICES

Wyre Forest District Council Public Notice

NOTICE OF APPLICATION(S) Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure)

Order 2015 (as amended) Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 Sections 67 & 73

CALB – Conservation/Listed Building, DEP – Departure from Development Plan

Listed building consent for the construction of a timber outbuilding and associated works Ref: 25/0921/LBC and 25/0920/HOU CALB Site: Lower Lodge, 4 Lower Park, Bewdley, Worcestershire, DY12 2DP

Single storey rear extension and installation of two rear roof lights (Resubmission of approved application 19/0381/LIST) Ref: 25/0940/LBC CALB

Site: 81 - 82 Welch Gate, Bewdley, Worcestershire, DY12 2AX

Partial demolition, extension and remodelling works to the existing dwellinghouse and associated works Ref: 25/0515/HOU DEP

Site: 51 The Foxholes, Kidderminster, Worcestershire, DY10 2QR

The above application(s) may be inspected and commented on within 21 days of the date of this Publication, via the Council's website <https://planningpa.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/online-applications/>. Any representations received will be made available for public viewing.

www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk

PUBLIC NOTICES

VALERIE ANN JONES Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 8 Yeomanry Mews, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6P; 8 Bridge Meadow Close, Sedgeborough, Evesham, WR11 7FJ, who died on 22/05/2025, must send written details to the address below by 20/02/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

Kim and Julian Piercey c/o Brindley Twist Taff & James LLP, Lowick Gate, Sixkin Drive, Coventry, CV3 4FJ. Ref: RC1/00204

PUBLIC NOTICES

JOHN THORNHILL SHARPE Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 18 Parkwood, Elmley Castle, Pershore, Worcestershire, WR10 3HT, who died on 20/11/2025, must send written details to the address below by 20/02/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

Jemma O'Connor c/o Thomson & Banks LLP, 1 Mansell Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, CV37 6NR. Ref: JLO/SHA186-2

PUBLIC NOTICES

ELIZABETH EMILY PICKERING Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of Flat 41, Malvern Court, Edwalton Lane, Bromsgrove, Worcestershire, B60 2DA, who died on 01/10/2025, must send written details to the address below by 20/02/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

Katie Love c/o Hutton's Law, 2 Scole Court, Oxon Way, Cardiff, CF24 5HF. Ref: KL DAV440.1

PUBLIC NOTICES

PAMELA GLADYS SKINNER Deceased

Pursuant to the Trustee Act 1925 anyone with a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the deceased, late of 10 Rebekah Gardens, Droitwich, Worcestershire, WR9 8UG, who died on 09/07/2025, must send written details to the address below by 20/02/2026, after which the Estate will be distributed with regard only to claims and interests notified.

Sophie Shakeshaft c/o HFG Solicitors LLP, Adam House, Birmingham Road, Kidderminster, DY10 2SH. Ref: SSH/SKI04004.0001

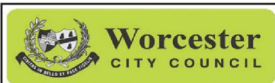
PUBLIC NOTICES

PATRICK JOHN CHESTER (Deceased)

Pursuant to Section 27 of the Trustee Act 1925 any persons having a claim against or an interest in the Estate of the aforementioned deceased, late of 197 Birmingham Road, Redditch, Worcestershire B97 4EA, who died on 19th August 2023 are required to send particulars thereof in writing to the undersigned lawyer on or before two months and one day from the date of this publication, after which date the Estate will be distributed having regard only to claims and interests of which they have had notice.

Hayley Jayne Sanders 55 Crumplefield Lane, Redditch, Worcs, B97 5PW

PUBLIC NOTICES



THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT) ORDER 2015 PROCEDURE (ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 PLANNING (LISTED BUILDINGS AND CONSERVATION AREAS) ACT 1990 SECTIONS 67 & 73

Notice is hereby given that the following applications have been submitted to the Council. The Codes are as follows: ASLCO Affecting Setting of Listed Building in Cons area CA Conservation Area

25/01005/HP Worcester City CA Proposed single storey rear extension and first floor front facing window, 29 Shrubbery Avenue Worcester WR1 1QN

25/01021/LB Worcester City ASLCO Listed building consent for minor external and internal works, 57-57A Broad Street Worcester WR1 3LY

25/01110/HP Worcester City CA Proposed loft conversion with rear dormer, single-storey rear extension, and replacement of existing windows 39 Park Avenue Worcester WR3 7AJ

Town and Country Planning (Consultation) England Direction 2009.

Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 2015 - Article 15.

The proposed development does not accord with the provisions of the development plan in force in the area in which the land to which the application relates is situated.

A copy of the above listed applications, plans and other documentation can be viewed online at <https://www.worcester.gov.uk/>. Any objections or representations concerning the proposal may be sent to planning@worcester.gov.uk to reach them on or before 10/01/2026.

PUBLIC NOTICES



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HORNBY 00 gauge steam locomotive and tender (Cat Ref R2880) BR Class 9F in black livery with late crest, engine motorised. Excellent condition, test run only otherwise unused c/w original boxing. £50 Tel 07415322794

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PAIR Doctor Bike handbar muffs vgc. £10. 01527 873674

PAIR Oxford Bone Dry handbar muffs, vgc. £10. 01527873674

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Further details and application forms are available on the School website:

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Monday 5 January 2026.

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BMW iX3 cruises to another mayor Car of the Year award



The BMW iX3 has been revealed as Electrifying.com's 2026 Car of the Year.

"With its impressive 500-mile² range and ultra-fast charging capabilities, the BMW iX3 delivers a truly compelling driving experience for our customers.

"We are incredibly grateful for this recognition and would like to extend our sincere thanks to the entire Electrifying.com team."

The Electrifying.com Awards celebrate the electric vehicles and companies that represent a genuine step forward for drivers and the wider EV sector.

Electrifying.com is the UK's fastest-growing electric-car platform who provide consumers with trusted, jargon-free insight into electric cars, charging and the transition to cleaner transport.

Priced from £58,755 OTR, the new BMW iX3 can be preordered from retailers nationwide with first customer deliveries taking place on March 7.

Visit: tinyurl.com/4hhsk93y for more information.

THE ALL-new BMW iX3 has been revealed as Electrifying.com's 2026 Car of the Year.

Closely following its recent triumph at the Top Gear.com Awards, the first Neue Klasse model impressed the team behind the world's most-watched EV YouTube channel, which declared it 'the most important car of the year'.

Ginny Buckley, Editor-in-Chief at Electrifying.com, was 'astounded' by the BMW iX3, commending its 'smooth power delivery', 'incredible' charging capabilities and 'minimalist' interior design. However, it was the SAV's 'super slick' automated driving functions that impressed her most, culminating in the 'smoothest and most relaxing' system she had experienced.

On presenting the headline accolade, Buckley said: "The phrase 'game-changer' is over-used in the car industry, but the BMW iX3 lives up to that claim.

"This is BMW starting again from the ground up - new battery tech, new software, the lot - with a claimed range of up to 500 miles.

"But the real standout is the bigger picture: BMW hasn't just made a better EV, it's worked out how to build one more sustainably too.

"The iX3 Neue Klasse is the point where BMW's electric future prop-

erly clicks. It's a brilliant, deserved winner."

With the launch of the Neue Klasse, the BMW Group has further intensified its efforts to increase circularity and reduce CO2 emissions across the entire vehicle life cycle - from production to end of life.

For instance, at its newest production plant in Debrecen, Hungary - where the BMW iX3 is built - normal operations run entirely without fossil fuels.

Furthermore, the product carbon footprint of the new BMW iX3 50 xDrive is 34 per cent smaller than that of its predecessor over its full life cycle1.

This means that, when powered by energy from the European electricity mix, it will have a smaller product carbon footprint (based on overall life cycle) than a comparable combustion-engine model once it has covered around 21,500 kilometres (13,358 miles).

Reflecting on the success of the BMW iX3, David George, CEO, BMW Group UK and Ireland said: "The launch of the new BMW iX3 marks a significant step-change in the performance and innovations of our battery electric vehicles.





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Chairman slammed by former boss after sacking

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: FORMER Bromsgrove Sporting boss Scott Adey-Linforth slammed club chairman Rod Brown as 'disrespectful' following his sacking as Rouslers manager.

Sporting sacked Adey-Linforth with the club 17th in the Southern League Premier Central table - two places and seven points clear of the relegation zone.

Adey-Linforth claims club chairman Brown offered him the chance to stay on at the Victoria Ground as assistant coach to newly-appointed boss Tim Flowers.

However, Adey-Linforth felt Brown's offer lacked respect for the work he had done since taking the manager's job at Sporting in November 2024.

Adey-Linforth posted on X: "This was my first job in management and my aim was to leave the club in a better place than what I found it in and I'm pleased to say I've done just that."

"After conversations with the chairman, he informed me of his decision

for me to step aside and work alongside another manager as an assistant coach.

"After the work me and my staff have put in over the last 12 months, I find this disrespectful and undermining of my abilities so have taken the decision to decline this offer and leave the club.

"Our aim as a club was mid-table and be it our league position isn't great. We are three points off where we need to be.

"I've learnt loads in the last 12 months and it has been a pleasure managing this football club.

"I'd like to place on record my thanks to the supporters, staff and players for all their help over the last 12 months."

The Standard contacted Bromsgrove Sporting for comment and is awaiting a response.

Adey-Linforth has since taken up the manager's job at Sporting's divisional rivals Stourbridge.

Sporting saw their weekend fixture against Real Bedford postponed due to a waterlogged pitch.

Bromsgrove travel to Bishop's Stortford on Saturday, December 20 with kick-off at 3pm at the RDA Stadium.

Church make FA Trophy history after penalty shootout win against Alfreton



Alfreton goalkeeper Harry Burgoyne the wrong way with Church's fourth penalty to send Kyle Storer's side through to the next round.

Church have now won all four of their FA Trophy matches on penalties this season and have reached the fourth round of the competition for the first time in their history.

GLOVERS AWAIT IN NEXT ROUND

Alvechurch will play National League side Yeovil Town in the fourth round of the FA Trophy.

Church will travel to Yeovil's Huish Park ground on the weekend of Saturday, January 10.

Alvechurch play two levels below Yeovil who sit in mid-table in the National League.

Fourth round opponents Yeovil won the FA Trophy in 2001/02 and played in the Championship as recently as the 2013/14 season.

DREAM DEBUT FOR ABBEY

Debutant Jez Abbey rescued a point for Alvechurch in mid-week as he scored an injury-time equaliser in a 1-1 draw against Bishop's Stortford.

Abbey levelled the game six minutes into injury time after Saleem Akanbi put the visitors ahead at Lye Meadow.

Alvechurch are next in action against Stamford on Saturday, December 20 with kick-off at 3pm at Lye Meadow.

Alvechurch celebrate after beating Alfreton Town in the FA Trophy. Picture by Joe Chandler/@joe.sportphoto

ALVECHURCH produced a stunning comeback from two goals down to beat Alfreton Town on penalties and reach the fourth round of the FA Trophy.

Church upstaged their National League North opponents at Lye Meadow to claim a dramatic 4-1 victory in the shootout following a 2-2 draw in regulation time.

Alfreton raced into a two-goal lead inside 15 minutes as Mark Beck and Bayley McCann put the visitors in command at the break.

However, Jonathan Ngandu halved the deficit in the second half before recent signing Manny Ilesanmi drew the home side level to take the game to penalties.

And Church scored all four of their penalties in the shootout as Louis Clifford converted the decisive spot kick after Alfreton twice hit the crossbar.

Alfreton broke the deadlock after just eight minutes as Beck turned home Taylor Anderson's

cross from the right at the second attempt from close range.

And the visitors doubled their lead five minutes later when McCann nipped in to win the ball ahead of a Church defender and coolly finished past Redman Evans when one-on-one.

Church eventually reduced the deficit after the break on 58 minutes as Ngandu lashed a sensational effort into the net via the aid of the post from 25-yards out.

And the home side equalised on 64 minutes when Ilesanmi found the bottom right corner from Kieran Wakefield's clever backheel.

Neither side could find a winner in the remaining minutes which saw the game go to a penalty shootout.

Successful penalties from Ilesanmi, Joe Willis and Ethan Sephton put Church on the brink of victory after both Beck and Harry Perritt struck the crossbar for the visitors.

And substitute Clifford sent

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