

Harriers sack Brown after promotion pain

Axe falls on boss as home play-off loss ends hopes

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers have parted company with manager Phil Brown following the club's failure to achieve promotion from the National League North.

Harriers confirmed the departure of Brown and his assistant Neil McDonald with immediate effect.

Kidderminster lost 2-1 against Chester at Aggborough in the play-off semi-finals on Sunday in what proved to be Brown's final game in charge of the club.

That came after Harriers failed to win the title and promotion on the final day of the season following a shock 2-1 defeat at Southport when they had started the day as league leaders.

The club have already begun the process of appointing Brown's successor.

Harriers chairman Richard Lane said: "Whilst we came very close to achieving our goal, the outcome of the season ultimately proved bitterly disappointing.

"We remain firmly focused on our primary objective for the club, which is returning to the National League. We feel now is the right time to make changes before embarking on our future campaign.

by Aaron Sutcliffe
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"I would personally like to thank both Phil and Neil for their efforts during their time with Kidderminster Harriers and we wish them nothing but the best for the future and their next challenge.

"The process of appointing a new manager is already under way and we hope to update our loyal supporters on that soon."

Former Hull City and Bolton Wanderers manager Brown became Harriers boss in January 2024 with the club bottom of the National League table.

He initially signed a deal until the end of the season and won six of his first eight matches in charge but was unable to prevent the club from suffering relegation.

The 65-year-old signed a new two-year deal to remain at Aggborough following the final game of the 2023/24 campaign.

And Brown looked set to return Harriers to the National League at the first attempt after the club embarked on a 13-game unbeaten run at the end of the season.

However, Kidderminster lost at Southport on the final



Phil Brown, who won two manager of the month awards this season, has left Kidderminster Harriers. Picture courtesy of Kidderminster Harriers FC.

day of the season which allowed Brackley Town to clinch the title and promotion.

Harriers then entered the play-offs and had home advantage against Chester in the semi-final, only to surrender an early lead in a narrow 2-1 defeat.

• Turn to the back page for more on Harriers' play-off agony.

Firefighters tackle serious blaze

A SEVERE fire broke out in a single-storey building in Stourport-on-Severn around 11pm on Monday.

Five crews from Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service

attended - two from Wyre Forest and one each from Droitwich, Worcester and Malvern Fire Stations.

The blaze, which measured 30metres by 10m was extinguished by

10 firefighters wearing breathing apparatus and using water jets.

A thermal imaging camera was used to check for hot spots.

No-one was injured in the blaze.

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Fundraiser aiming to give Dottie her voice

by **Tristan Harris**
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A TOTAL of £2,551.42 was raised at an event to help give a voice to a two-year-old non-verbal girl from Stourport.

Dottie Loveridge was born with a genetic neurological condition, cysts on the brain and autism which means she is unable to understand or communicate with the world around her.

Despite her daily challenges, her mum Gemma said she was still the happiest, funniest, cutest and most loving little girl many people would meet.

Now she, her family and friends are trying to raise £8,000 to fund a communication tablet device and assistant eye tracker which would enable Dottie to communicate and understand those closest to her. It will also provide ongoing help with her developmental delays and disabilities.

The latest event takes the grand total for the fundraiser to £6,639.39.

The 'Give Dottie Her Voice' event at the Severn's Club in Stourport on Saturday featured local DJ SoulCarrot and other



Mick Carridine, aka, DJ SoulCarrot, who performed at the event. RIGHT: The cash from the fundraiser will go towards equipment to help Dottie find her voice. s

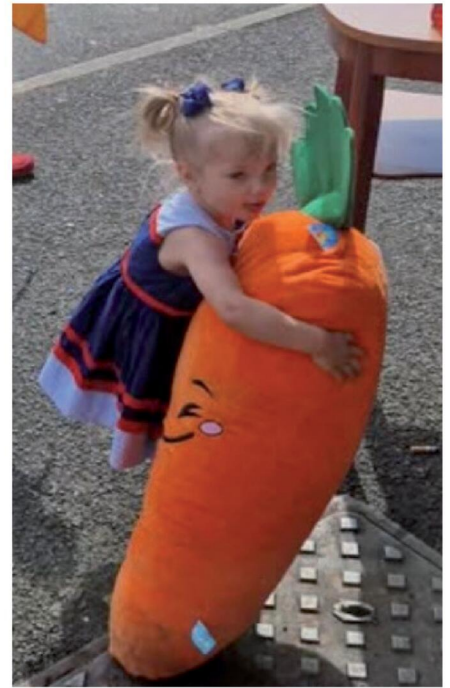
We are here for you and will do all we can to support you in getting what you need to lead a happy and fulfilled life."

Lois added special thanks to Darren at Severn's Club and all the staff - especially Bernie and Craig - 'who always went above and beyond', Mick Carridine for being the DJ and compere and Loz Rabone for the live music.

"Thank you to our dog show sponsors Stourport Dog Groomers and Pet 4 Max," he said.. "Thank you to Dottie's family and in particular Gemma Loveridge - you worked your socks off for your little girl. Thanks for letting us be part of Dottie's Journey."

Long-term, Dottie's mum Gemma has found out about specialist treatment that is available for her in the US which could potentially transform her life and quality of living.

Visit the fundraising page - gofundme.com/t/dottie-voice/ - to donate and for updates.



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Teams of four people are being sought to take part in Bewdley Rowing Club's Fun Regatta. s

Oar-some way to join fun regatta

THE CHANCE to have a go at rowing and a host of other activities will be on offer when Bewdley Rowing Club's Fun Regatta takes place on June 7.

There will be opportunities for all abilities - from complete beginners and some short

distance fun racing. There are events for teams of four - men's, women's, and mixed who are over 16.

The winning team will get a medal and a free club membership and there is a separate prize for the best fancy dress.

There will also be a barbecue, disco and a bar at the event which runs at the club.

Entry to the event is £80 per team and includes all equipment and coaching.

Training will be provided by a club member to coach

and cox and there will be a maximum of six training sessions per team between now and Regatta Day on June 7.

Visit bewdleyrc.co.uk for more and go to the Bewdley Rowing Club Facebook page for updates.

Appeal to come and join Big Clean Up

A RALLYING call has been issued to volunteers to come and help with The Big Clean Up at Springfield Park in Kidderminster.

The event, which runs from 10am to 12pm next Saturday, May 17, has been organised by the Sion Hill Community Group and will feature a litter pick and swap shop.

Everyone is welcome to attend the event and all equipment will be provided.

Participants should meet at the Green on Usmere Road. Those who cannot make this day or time are urged to undertake their own litter picks.

For the Swap Shop, people are urged to take along

items they no longer use but still work and are useful.

Others who need items are welcome to take what they need.

A spokesperson for the event said: "People clearly want to have a country to be proud of and that pride starts with where you live, so do get involved."

PUBLIC NOTICES



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Stourport High School students reflecting on sixth-form success

by **Tristan Harris**
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SIXTH-FORMERS at Stourport High School had their hard work and excellence recognised at the annual Awards and Leavers Celebration.

Dozens of Year 13 students received awards in all subjects, along with glowing citations from their teachers.

Student of the Year went to Mollie Kirk, who was described as 'having the characteristics of a perfect sixth former'. She was deemed a supportive student, with dogged determination, who had been a privilege to teach.

Role model and mentor to younger students Rosie Linney, was awarded the 'Kindness and Respect - Community Award'.

The packed hall heard how she was a 'supportive friend, conscientious to the extreme and a fierce upholder of the school values'.

Safina Watters earned the 'Determination - Progress Award' for giving full commitment at all her studies. She also picked up the 'Geographer Pioneer Extraordinaire Award' for her passion and drive at GCSE and A-level.

The school's ACE (Academy, Colleges and Education) rugby programme chose Harry Wright as the



'Coach's Player of the Year', for his hard work, dedication and humility on and off the field. This earned

him selection for both Gloucester and England U18s.

Dylan Pearson received the 'Most

Improved Award' for his hard work, focus and dedication to rugby and the ACE team.

Coach's Player of the Year for the elite basketball programme went to the 'exceptional' captain Finley Woodward. The citation highlighted his 'relentless work rate that set a fantastic example for the entire squad'.

Headteacher Dr Lizzy Ford said: "The passion and drive that our students demonstrate to improve and succeed in all they do is phenomenal, and I and their teachers are incredibly proud of them.

"Through their time here they have grown into well-rounded young adults, with a desire to succeed and to help others in their community, guided by their dedicated teachers and supported by their loving families.

"I'm sure they will excel in their forthcoming exams and whether moving onto university or apprenticeships, we wish them all the very best."

The school is part of the Severn Academies Educational Trust, and chief executive Matthew Carpenter added his praise and best wishes to the students.

He said: "Our mantra is 'growing brilliance' and occasions like these are fine examples of how we help prepare our young people to lead brilliant lives."

Dylan Pearson, Rosie Linney, Mollie Kirk, Finley Woodward, Safina Watters and Harry Wright with their awards. s



Finley Pugh, year three, Grace Dean, year five, and Lucas Dean, year two, in the spare room in the school which has been earmarked for the gym. s

PUPILS at St Bartholomew's CE Primary School in Stourport are hoping to win first place and £1,500 in a competition so they can get a purpose-built gym for year-round health and fitness activities.

The school is in the running in the Tesco Stronger Start vote which, if won, would fund a Fitness Fun Primary Gym.

It would enable all children of all ages and abilities to enjoy exercise and workouts.

Mike Goodall, head of school, said: "We have developed some fantastic outdoor health and fitness resources, but there are, of course, considerable periods of the school year when it is too cold and wet to use.

"By reconfiguring a few rooms, we have created the space needed to provide all-year resources such as rowing machines, yoga

mats and aerobic steppers.

"We hope it will help our children establish good habits for life.

"Physical fitness also positively impacts on a child's ability to learn and to avoid mental ill-health."

With three worthy bids for customers to choose from, the school is set to bag at least £500 but hopes enough will choose their project to win first place and £1,500.

Customers can vote with the blue tokens, given on all purchases, in Tesco stores throughout Wyre Forest until June 30.

The Tesco Stronger Starts grant programme, delivered in partnership with Groundwork UK, helps schools and community groups support physical health and mental wellbeing.

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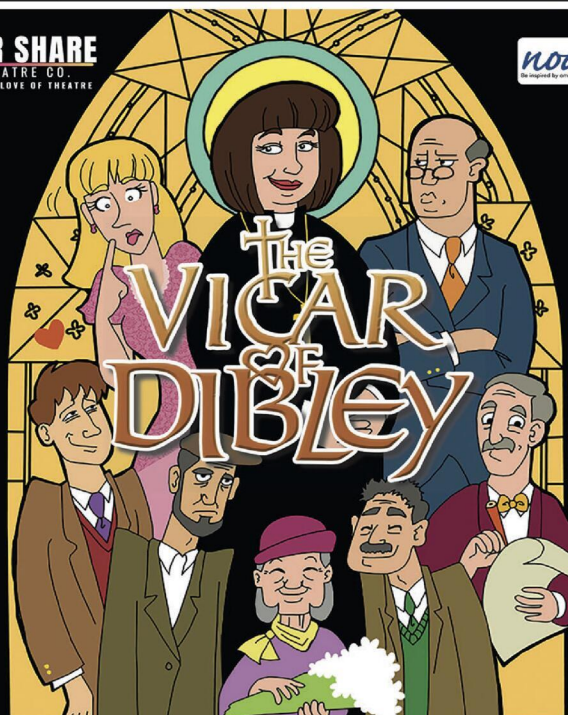


Illustration by ladykeane

A stage play adapted from the original TV series
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Man charged with burglary

A KIDDERMINSTER man has appeared in court, accused of stealing from elderly people during burglaries.

The homes targeted were in Halesowen and Pedmore. Investigations were launched after incidents were reported on April 8 and 10.

Police said a man entered the homes of a 77-year-old man and a 100-year-old woman and duped them into handing over money.

Investigations led to the arrest of a 55-year-old man in Kidderminster last Wednesday morning.

Daniel Hemmings, from Kidderminster, appeared before Wolverhampton Magistrates' Court, charged with two counts of burglary and one count of fraud by false representation.

Police probe car break-in

A NUMBER of items were stolen from a car when it was parked in Kidderminster.

The vehicle was on a car park in Longfellow Green overnight between last Thursday and Friday (May 1 and 2) when thieves gained access.

They stole vehicle documents, a penknife and a torch from the glove box.

Kidderminster Police are urging witnesses or anyone with information to call police on 101 or Crimestoppers, anonymously, on 0800 555 111.

New information boards highlight common's past

by **Tristan Harris**
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TWO INTERPRETATION boards on the site's geology and history are now in place at Hartlebury Common.

The boards have been placed at the Wilden Top car park by Hartlebury Common Local Group (HCLG) which said it was delighted with the installations.

The latest boards complete a set of six which describe Hartlebury Common, its creation, its uses through the centuries and current status.

Members of the group have worked in partnership with Worcestershire County Council, with help from the Earth Heritage Trust, the Lapworth Museum of Geology and Bewdley Museum, to highlight the geological background and historical changes to the common.

The six boards illustrate the common's management, its wildlife and the Heather Trail, with one board dedicated especially to bees and wasps, for which the common is nationally important. They were designed by morgancreative.carbonmade.com which is well known for its interpretation boards.

Mike Lomax, chair of the Hartlebury Common Local Group, said "We were keen as a group to



Martin Barnett, from Worcestershire County Council (WCC), with Fran Davies, Mike Lomax and Mary Williams, from Hartlebury Common Local Group, along with Charlie Harland and John Clarke, from WCC. s

get across that Hartlebury Common is more than just a place to walk the dog.

"It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and a unique example of lowland heath, which is a fast-declining habitat across England as a whole.

"The design of the boards has involved a lot of hard work by our committee members, but we think the final results are well worth it.

"They will be of long standing benefit to locals and visitors alike."

Mr Lomax explained Hartlebury Common was home to a wide range of plants, birds, butterflies and other insects that had disappeared from so many places.

"We hope the provision of the new boards show how the common has been formed and the history behind it, to heighten appreciation of this amazing site," he added.

"How fortunate we are to have this wonderful place on our doorstep – one of the premier sites for nature in Worcestershire!"

Hartlebury Common Local

Group was set up in 2006 by local residents keen to promote the common and ensure it thrives into the future as an important area of heathland.

The group undertakes regular conservation tasks on the common and holds monthly talks for members in the winter as well as organising walks during the summer months.

Visit hartleburycommon.org.uk for more information on Hartlebury Common, the local group and the information boards.

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Hunt for group after school gates damaged

by **Tristan Harris**
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THE GATES to a school in Kidderminster have been damaged by vandals.

The criminals struck around 7pm on April 17, pushing the gates of Birchen Coppice School, Woodbury Road, open and causing the damage.

Around this time, a large group of youths were seen loitering around the front of the school with some trespassing on the school grounds.

Police have released descriptions of those involved.

One was a white boy with medium brown hair and wearing a light blue, short sleeved T-shirt and a grey track-suit bottoms. He had a bag over his shoulder.

Another was a white girl with long blonde, straight hair and wearing a white, long sleeved top and black leggings with white trainers.

A girl with long red, straight hair and wearing a long sleeved black top with white stripes down each arm, black leggings and black, fluffy sliders was also among the group.

There was an individual wearing either light blue or grey shorts, a black hooded top, with the hood up sunglasses

es and black face covering, black ankle socks and slider shoes

Another boy was wearing a black/grey or navy light jacket with a black hood, grey jogging bottoms and black trainers. And he had a black face covering and was wearing a grey hooded top underneath the jacket with the hood up.

There was a white boy with dark hair and wearing a light blue hooded track-suit top and light blue tracksuit bottoms and a girl with dark hair who was wearing a black puffer jacket with a white logo on the back of the right shoulder.

The others included a short, white boy with blond hair and wearing a camouflage jacket and two white boys with short dark hair who were wearing black track-suits.

Anyone who witnessed the damage being caused or knows who any of the youths are from the description should click here to report it to West Mercia Police.

Alternatively, call PC Rachael Perry on 07773 044005 or email: Rachael.perry@westmercia.police.uk with the details.

PC Perry said: "Thank you for your help. It is only by the police and the public working together that we can prevent and detect crime."



The cast for the Vicar of Dibley which is being staged at St Mary's and All Saints Church in Kidderminster. s

Classic heading this way

CLASSIC BBC sitcom The Vicar of Dibley is set to be staged in Kidderminster next week.

Fittingly the venue for The Fair Share Theatre's ecclesiastical escapades will be St Mary's and All Saints Church with performances at 7pm on Thursday, Friday and Saturday (May 15, 16 and 17).

The show, directed by Nathan Beckett-Wilde and Josie Marston, is based on four episodes from the TV series - The Arrival, The Engagement, Dibley Live and Love and Marriage.

A spokesperson for the group said: "Our

friends at the church have welcomed us with open arms.

"With only three live performances, and tickets selling fast, don't miss your chance to witness Geraldine, Alice, Hugo, and the wonderfully bonkers parish council in all their gloriously eccentric glory."

"Expect belly laughs, heartwarming moments, and a divine evening of community theatre at its best."

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Youngsters from Kidderminster's Little Trinity Nursery have been having lots of fun in the garden. s

GREEN FINGERS: CHILDREN at Kidderminster's Little Trinity Nursery have been making the most of spring by getting busy in the nursery garden.

This season, the children have been planting seeds and bulbs and sowing flowers and a variety of vegetables, all to get the garden ready for a vibrant summer display.

Nursery manager, Gaynor Carter, said: "Gardening and growing are activities the children truly love."

"They enjoy planting seeds and bulbs, watching as flowers and vegetables begin to sprout and learning about the wonders of the natural world through hands-on experiences."

As well as planting potatoes, carrots, cucumbers and lettuce, which will be harvested and enjoyed in the nursery kitchen, the children have also been creative, making pictures using real flowers and bulbs as their inspiration.

The nature-inspired crafts allow them to explore different textures, shapes, and colours, sparking their artistic expression and deepening their connection to the garden.

Gardening also provides opportunities to touch, smell and observe plants, helping them understand their environment while fostering curiosity and responsibility.

Gaynor added: "Being outdoors is always a favourite, especially when it's time to harvest."

"The children love tasting the fruits of their labour in nursery or taking their home-grown produce home to share with their families."

From exploring the garden with trowels and forks to watering plants and creating flower and bulb pictures, the springtime activities ensure that all children, from the youngest at two years old and up, can take part in a fun, educational, and memorable gardening adventure.

Events to mark anniversary of town church

BEWDLEY Methodist Church will celebrate its 230th birthday this weekend with two open days, a special concert and a service of celebration and rededication.

The church – the newest one in the historic town centre – was opened in 1795 and today's congregation is inviting visitors to look around the Grade II listed building and share in the anniversary celebrations.

The church (pictured), next door to the Jubilee Gardens entrance, will be open from 10am to 4pm tomorrow (Saturday, May 10) and between midday and 4pm on Sunday (May 12).

The events will feature exhibits about the church's history, its support for the local community and beyond, its musical heritage and current activities. The organisers are particularly keen to welcome anyone with a past connection to the church, perhaps through baptism, marriage, Sunday School or youth club.

Then, at 2.30pm next Saturday, May 17, there will be a special 'Music in the Chapel' concert, featuring talented soprano soloist Ruby Thorne. And next Sunday at 10.30am next Sunday, May 18, there will be the anniversary service of celebration and rededication.

Tickets for the concert, which include light refreshments, cost £10 but all other events



are free.

Other Bewdley churches

Bewdley's Quaker Meeting House was built in 1691, the Baptist church in 1764 and, what is now Holy Family Catholic Church, was originally a Presbyterian chapel built in 1778.

St Anne's Parish Church has a tower dating from 1695 and the main body of the church was completed in 1748. Riverside Elton church meet in a converted snooker hall.

Visit the Bewdley Methodist Church website at: bewdleymethodists.org.uk for more information on the 230th anniversary events.

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Reform take control of county council

by **Tristan Harris**
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THE WYRE Forest divisions in the Worcestershire County Council elections were dominated by Reform UK which took eight of the ten seats.

Only two Conservatives – Chaddesley stalwart and Wyre Forest District Council leader, Coun Marcus Hart, and Bewdley's Dan Morehead – managed to hold onto their seats.

The voter turn-out averaged 33.6 per cent of those eligible to vote across the Wyre Forest District. The highest turn-out was in Bewdley – at 40.1 per cent – and the lowest was 26.5 per cent in St George's.

Coun Hart told The Standard: 'I'm mightily relieved – it has been a relentless campaign.'

'I have worked tirelessly for the people of Chaddesley for over eight years and I want to thank every single person who voted for me.'

By the end of the count, Worcestershire's make-up mirrored many other councils being contested last week across England.

One of the new Reform UK councillors, Rob Wharton (St Peter's) said he got into politics as he wanted to 'make daily life better for people'. He added one of the issues which would be top of his agenda would be potholes.

On the success of Reform UK,



Reform UK's Rob Wharton.

he added he felt many people felt like they had not been listened to for years and wanted their voices to be heard.

The results meant the Conservatives lost control of Worcestershire County Council for the first time in decades.

Reform UK now has 27 seats on the new-look council, the Conservatives have 12, The Green Party has eight councillors, the Liberal Democrats six, Labour two and there are two independents.

Wyre Forest seat results

In St Barnabas, Reform UK's Anthony Upton polled 1,022, finishing 265 votes ahead of Conservative David Ross. Labour and Co-operative's Bernadette Connor was third, Oliver Walker



Coun Marcus Hart.

(Lib Dem) fourth and David Finch (Green) fifth.

Coun Morehead held the Bewdley seat for the Conservatives, polling 1,244. He beat Reform UK's Lisa Hyde who finished second on 1,070. In third was Labour's Rod Stanczyn, fourth was Corinne Bailey (Green) and fifth was Ingrid Shmeising-Barnes (Lib Dem).

Stourport – Mitton recorded another Reform UK gain as Ian Creswell achieved 1,298 votes. Second was Conservative Chris Rogers on 747. He was followed by John Caldwell (Lib Dem), Jackie Griffiths (Labour) and Gilda Davis (Green).

In Stourport – Arley Kings and Riverside, Reform UK's Karl Perks took the seat with 1,154 votes, almost doubling the tally of second-placed Alan Sutton (Conservative)



The count took place at Wyre Forest Leisure Centre last Friday. Pictures by Tristan Harris. © Bullivant Media Group Ltd.

who finished on 596. Next was Labour's William Moule, then Independent John Thomas, Lib Dem Timothy Schmeising-Barnes and Clive Wood (Green).

Reform UK took Cookley, Wolverley and Wribbenthal as Jenny Shaw notched up 1,122 votes. Second was Ben Brookes (Conservative) on 975. Labour's Phil Edmundson was third, Green candidate Kate Spohrer fourth and Clud Gollop (Lib Dem) fifth.

St Chad's was won by Bill Hopkins (Reform UK) who polled 812. Stalwart Fran Oborski (Liberal Party – Keep In Local) was second on 591. Labour and Co-operative's Marie Holmes was third, Lib Dem Nigel Grace was fourth, Conservative Steven Holland was fifth with Brett Caullfield (Green) sixth.

In St John's, Reform UK's Matthew Jones finished on 946 votes and Conservative John Campion (Conservative) came second on 622. Labour and Co-operative John Beckingham was third, followed by Independent Leigh Whitehouse,

Green Party candidate John Davis and Liberal Democrat Suzanne Nicholl.

Coun Hart polled 1,024 in Chaddesley to hold onto that seat – 76 votes ahead of Reform UK candidate Philip Hingley. Independent Helen Dyke was third, Labour's Stuart Holmes was fourth, Wren Nicholson (Green) was fifth and Lin Fem Linda Hardwick was sixth.

St Peter's was taken by Reform UK's Rob Wharton who polled 813 votes – 189 ahead of the Conservative candidate Nathan Desmond in second. Labour's Keith Budden took third, Independent Peter Dyke was fourth and Doug Hine (Green) fifth.

In St George's – the first seat to be announced – Mark Crosby (Reform UK) was first with 872 votes, ahead of Independent Tony Muir on 331.

Third was Di Smith (Labour and Co-operative), followed by Shazu Miah (Liberal Party – Keep in Local), the Green Party's Oskar Hyams and Lib Dem Mark Heafield.

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Couple's anniversary day goes with a bang

A STOURPORT couple chose a unique way to mark their wedding anniversary this year – by trying something completely new at the first-ever Silver Shots clay shooting session.

Paul and Jane Stokes celebrated an impressive 46 years of marriage at the event, hosted by Shooting 4 Fun (S4F) on April 23.

The pair decided it was the perfect opportunity to tick something off their bucket list.

The Silver Shots event, specially designed for the over-65s, was a resounding success, with sessions fully booked throughout the day

by Tristan Harris
tristan.harris
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at S4F's Oaklands Outdoor Pursuits Centre in Hanbury.

A mix of attendees came along to try their hand at clay shooting, including individuals who had never handled a shotgun before, as well as those revisiting a long-lost passion. Among them was a man who had loved clay shooting in his younger years but had given it up when family and other commitments took over. After a slightly rusty start, it was clear that his previous experience hadn't left him – he was soon confidently break-

ing clays, and left delighted to have rekindled a hobby he once loved.

Mark Treverton, owner of S4F, was on hand throughout the event to expertly guide participants, ensuring everyone felt confident and comfortable.

Recognising that agility, mobility, and strength can vary, Mark carefully selected lighter-weight shotguns with reduced recoil for those attendees who would struggle with the physical demands of standard shooting equipment.

This thoughtful approach made the sport accessible, even to those with age-related ailments, mobility challenges or smaller frames.

With complimentary tea and coffee, a welcoming atmosphere, and a spirit of fun and encouragement, many attendees stayed beyond their allotted session time to chat, swap stories and make new friendships.

Anyone thinking of giving clay shooting a go – whether they are celebrating a special occasion or simply wanting to tick something off their bucket list – is urged to consider the Shooting 4 Fun sessions.

They offer a fantastic opportunity for beginners and enthusiasts alike.

Visit shooting4fun.co.uk or call Mark Treverton on 01527 575141 for more information or to book places.



Paul and Jane Stokes celebrated their anniversary with some Silver Shots. s



Renowned pianist Peter Bradley-Fulgoni will be performing at Hartlebury Castle. s

A classic way to raise funds for castle trust at concert

A FUNDRAISING musical evening will take place at Hartlebury Castle this evening (Friday, May 9).

Award-winning pianist Peter Bradley-Fulgoni will be performing a breathtaking classical concert at 7pm in the Medieval Great Hall, with all proceeds going to Hartlebury Castle Trust, the charity which owns and manages the Hartlebury Castle Estate.

Peter has performed throughout Europe and Asia and studied at

prestigious institutions including the Royal College of Music.

Hartlebury Castle Trust director Steve Bagnall said: "This is an exciting fundraising event for the trust.

"All ticket sales will go towards transforming the castle's future – giving visitors a glimpse into the past while inviting them to reflect on life today.

"We're thrilled to have Peter supporting this vision with what

promises to be a brilliant performance."

Peter added: "I'm looking forward to performing at this beautiful venue to help raise money for this wonderful charity.

"It is also an amazing opportunity to play this historic Bluthner piano. It has a warm, rich sound – a unique voice all of its own."

Classical pieces will feature household names including Debussy, Chopin and Beethoven,

as well as modern composers.

Peter added: "I hope that my programme of personal favourite pieces will take the audience on a classical journey."

Tickets for Support Hartlebury Castle: An Evening of Piano Music cost £20 (including a complimentary glass of wine or non-alcoholic alternative. There is a \$1.50 booking fee per transaction.

Visit hartleburycastle.com for more information and tickets.

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Car tyre is destroyed by vandals

A VEHICLE was vandalised in Stourport overnight between Monday and Tuesday.

Police said a tyre on the car was slashed while it was parked in William Coley Place.

Police are investigating and have urged witnesses or anyone with information or video footage to get in touch.

A BLACK Renault Clio was stolen from Stourport between 1am and 8.35am on Tuesday.

The thieves struck in Worth Crescent and took the vehicle without the keys.

Police are appealing for residents living in that road and the surrounding ones to check their CCTV or doorbell footage to see if they have captured any suspicious behaviour.

Witnesses or anyone with information on either of the above incidents should call police on 101 or Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.

News online: www.kidderminsterstandard.co.uk

Cocktails & chat to help new business keep growing

A NEW networking event combining cocktails and conversations launched in Kidderminster last week.

The event for entrepreneurs and small business owners was started through a collaboration between Sail Mortgages' Lisa Neath and Garrett Learning's Wendy Garrett.

Cocktails and Connections, launched last Thursday (May 1) at The Futurist (Cinema) bar on Green Street. Self-employed people and small business owners came to engage in casual conversation and make connections while enjoying a delightful array of cocktails or mocktails.

In keeping with the cinema theme, there were a couple of movie quizzes as well as a pick-and-mix bag with popcorn.

Attendees said the atmosphere was like the first night of a new film being released with lots of laughter and great conversations with collaborations beginning to be made.

The event was a great success and Wendy and Lisa are looking

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

forward to putting the next one on.

Wendy said: "This is coming from a place of community spirit."

"This is for anyone who is self-employed and misses those after-work drinks or perhaps you work from home and miss your colleagues, this might be right for you."

"This will be an informal and relaxed environment with no awkward or formal pitches. Just a gathering of new friends chatting in a bar setting."

She added The Futurist – which hosted the event – was a community social hub and another venue which needed support.

"You'll be welcomed by friendly faces," she said.

Lisa added: "It was lovely to see people chatting and laughing with those amazing cocktails in their hands, a networking event that wasn't too networky."

Sachia Mooney, the owner and creative lead of Futurist Cinema,



Lisa Neath, from Sail Mortgages, and Wendy Garrett, from Garrett Learning, launched Cocktails and Connections last week. s

said: "It was fantastic to welcome new faces through the doors of our independent cinema."

"Since taking on Kidderminster's cinema last July, we've been exploring new ways to connect with our community beyond our regular screenings."

"It was a real pleasure to support

this new venture, which added to the vibrant atmosphere we've been building and great to see our bar full of energy and conversation."

Anyone wanting more information should email Wendy at wendy@garrettlearning.co.uk or Lisa at lisa.neath@sailmortgages.co.uk for further details.



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Election shock sent a message says Tory chief

THE WORCESTERSHIRE County Councillor elected as leader of the Conservative Group said last week's local elections sent a powerful political message in the area.

Coun Adam Kent, who represents Wythall on the authority, pledged to put the residents' needs ahead of national politics.

It comes after Reform UK swept the board across the county, taking 27 seats and leaving the once-leading Conservative Group on 12.

Coun Kent thanked everyone who voted for him to help him hold onto his seat and said he was honoured to be elected as group leader.

"This is a moment for clear, local leadership – grounded in the priorities of our communities," he said.

"We heard the public loud and clear - many turned to Reform, frustrated with national politics.

"While those elections should have focused on local issues, we understand that people wanted to send a message."



Mapping out his vision, he said the Conservative Group would focus on collaborative working to deliver practical results.

Among his pledges were to 'protect Worcestershire's identity as One Worcestershire Council rather than splitting the county into two', taking real action on flood prevention and resilience and expanding public transport, including the successful on-demand bus services.

He also vowed the party and council would maintain and improve roads and pavements across the county, back rural communities and support farm-

Keeping his cool – Coun Adam Kent is the new Conservative Group Leader. s

ers and lead a cross-party drive to recruit more foster carers to improve children's lives and easing the financial burden on services.

He is calling on all councillors, regardless of party, to actively support fostering.

"Every councillor can help change a child's future. That's not only good for the child, it's good for the future sustainability of our services," he said.

"Here in Worcestershire, what matters most is who will stand up for local residents. That's what we intend to do – be the local champions our communities need and rebuild our Conservative Group on that firm foundation.

"People want to see continued focus on what matters to their everyday lives – protecting Worcestershire's identity, investing in roads and public transport, tackling flooding, supporting our rural areas, and standing up for children in care."



Wyre Forest Green Party co-ordinator John Davies with Oskar Hyams, who stood in St George's at the age of just 18. Picture by Tristan Harris. © Bullivant Media Group Ltd.

Teen candidate: Politics impacts us all

ONE of the candidates standing in the Wyre Forest seats in the Worcestershire County Council elections was believed to be one of the youngest in the country.

Oskar Hyams, who was representing the Green Party in St George's, only turned 18 in March.

And John Davies, the co-ordinator of the Wyre Forest Green Party, predicts big things for the prodigy, including one day becoming an MP.

Oskar said: "I have been really interested in politics since the Brexit

Referendum. But, when I told people I was standing in this election, a lot of them immediately said: 'why would you want to do that?'"

He said a lot of people had expressed the view that 'politics was boring'.

"But, politics have an impact on every impact of everyone's daily life," he added. "We need more people to take an interest in politics and especially more young people."

"I'm studying politics and there are only five of us in the class which shows there is just not

enough young people interested in politics." And Oskar stressed it was important people voted in elections.

"During the campaign, I was saying to people: 'I don't mind which way you vote, but the important thing is you get out and vote for someone you believe in'," he explained.

In his first election, Oskar finished sixth in his division but the determined campaigner is confident this is just the start of what will be a long-term political journey.

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Vauxhall Corsa 1.4 Energy 5Dr	Red	2016/16	£6,499
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Ford Focus 1.0T ST-Line-X 5Dr	Blue	2019/19	£12,699

Model	Colour	Year	Price
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Caught over crypto crime

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

A MAN has been handed a suspended sentence he stole and gambled away more than £150,000 in cryptoassets in what is the first ever conviction relating to cryptocurrency in West Mercia Police.

Ben Noden, 38, from Shipston-on-Stour, Warwickshire, was sentenced at Worcester Crown Court on Wednesday he previously pleaded guilty to two counts of theft by employee and fraud by false representation. The offences took place in Kidderminster.

Noden was handed a 24-month sentence, suspended for 24 months for theft by employee, 12 months suspended for 24 months for fraud by false representation and eight months suspended for 24 months for theft other, including theft by finding.

The sentences will run concurrently, meaning the overall sentence is 24 months, suspended for 14 months.

The sentence comes after a cryptoasset tracing investigation against Noden was launched in 2022.

The investigation, the first of its kind by West Mercia Police, found Noden had stolen £150,000 which had been invested into cryptoassets.

Cryptoassets or cryptocurrencies are an alternative way of storing value, with transfers and payments occurring through a peer-to-peer system.

It means users can send and receive the 'cash' directly without an intermediary such as a bank.

The complex investigation, led by the Kidderminster-based Reactive CID, was supported by Det Con Dave Allen from West Mercia Police's Cyber Crime Unit who carried out extensive and meticulous analysis across 90 different cryptoassets across multiple blockchain layers.

The investigation also found Noden had made 11 transactions to his own personal account, stealing approximately £3,000 in cash.

No cryptoassets were seized by the police as Noden had used all the assets to fund a gambling habit.

Det Ch Insp Matt Mcnelis, who leads the Cyber Crime Unit, said: "This case marks West Mercia Police's first successful cryptoasset tracing investigation to reach court and demonstrates the complexity of such investigations and importantly how cryptoassets analysis can support other departments in securing positive outcomes for victims."

"I would like to commend the work of Detective Constable Dave Allen in his determination in a complex investigation to secure this successful outcome at court."



The 'Memories and Me' bags can be reserved at libraries or online. s

SUPPORT AVAILABLE: LIBRARIES across Worcestershire, including Kidderminster, have launched a 'Memories and Me' Project to support people living with dementia.

The scheme is designed to support both people living with dementia and their carers.

It features Memory Bags that encourage conversation, bring back cherished memories and allow meaningful time to be spent together.

Each Memory Bag has a different theme, such as sports, childhood, travel, gardening, pets, or music. They also contain books, puzzles, games, and sensory objects to explore. These carefully chosen items help spark memories and meaningful interactions.

Louisa Ackling, library development and engagement manager, said: "Dementia affects not just individuals but entire families, making support and connection more important than ever."

"Through the Memories and Me project, Worcestershire's libraries are providing a valuable resource to encourage conversations, rekindle memories, and bring moments of joy."

"We hope these Memory Bags offer comfort and meaningful engagement to those who need them most."

Memory Bags are available for loan to carers and family members through Worcestershire's libraries for free.

They can be reserved online or collected from the library itself.

All library staff have been trained through the Alzheimer's Society 'Dementia Friends' programme. They are ready to support people living with dementia as well as carers or family members to find the right library resources or activities for them.

The Memories and Me project has been funded by The National Lottery through Arts Council England, supporting libraries' commitment to being dementia-friendly spaces and providing resources to improve the wellbeing of individuals living with dementia.

Visit: worcestershire.gov.uk/council-services/worcestershire-libraries/memories-and-me for more information on the Memory Bags and to reserve them.

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Drugs and alcohol training 'a boost'

WORCESTERSHIRE schools have received 'eye opening' drug and alcohol training from drug education charity Hope UK.

Teachers, youth workers and young people feel 'better equipped to have conversations around substance use' following the training courses.

Worcestershire County Council's Director of Public Health, Dr Lisa McNally, said: "We are delighted to be working with Hope UK.

"This fantastic training equips educators with the knowledge to recognise signs and symptoms of drug use, improve their own prac-

tice and gain a better understanding of the issues in an ever-changing drug use landscape.

"This awareness allows professionals to identify at-risk young people early and intervene appropriately.

"This may be through open and honest conversations, discussing dangers or providing alternatives and ultimately aims to reduce the likelihood of drug use."

Police and Crime Commissioner John Campion added: "A key element of the focus on breaking the drugs trade in West Mercia, is cutting the demand. "That's why it's

important that we equip our young people with the skills and education they need to make informed choices that steer them away from substance misuse.

"Through the Safer Worcestershire project, partners are coming together to support the work of Hope UK that helps to reduce crime, stop harm, and ultimately build safer communities."

And Sarah Brighton, CEO of Hope UK, said: "We have been privileged to work with so many fantastic schools and youth organisations in Worcestershire and see the excellent work they are doing throughout the county.

"We hope that our training helps these groups equip their young people with the life skills they need to manage challenging drug-related situations.

"We are very grateful to Worcestershire County Council's Public Health Team and the Police and Crime Commissioner for funding this vital work."

Email: training@hopeuk.org or visit: hopeuk.org for more on the Hope UK charity.

Click through the link on our website for more on the Safer Worcestershire Partnership.

Hope UK CEO Sarah Brighton, assistant PCC Steve Mackay and Dr Lisa McNally at Birchensale Middle School. s



Bromsgrove's Evie Hodgetts, who was named Worcestershire's Young Poet Laureate for 2025-26. s

RIGHT LINES: WORCESTER SHIRE'S Young Poet Laureate for 2025/26 has been crowned.

Worcestershire County Council and Severn Arts announced Evie Hodgetts, from Bromsgrove, will take up the role.

This year's competition drew a record number of aspiring writers, with 148 poems submitted from across the county. A total of 12 finalists took to the stage at The Hive in Worcester and the talented entrants captivated the judges with their 'outstanding' performances.

Louisa Ackling, Worcestershire Library Service development and engagement manager, said: "The Young Poet Laureate event is a cherished annual celebration in our county, offering a stage for emerging young writers.

"This year's final was especially powerful, their words resonated with honesty, strength, and insight, leaving a lasting impact on everyone present."

Worcestershire's Young Poet Laureate competition has been running for 15 years and aims to encourage young people to express themselves through poetry.

It also provides a platform for young

poets to showcase their work and gain recognition for their talent.

Elaine Knight, arts director at Severn Arts added: "Well done to all our finalists and congratulations to our fantastic winners.

"This year we had our highest number of competition entries so just getting to the final was a huge achievement.

"The standard of entries was very high, and we would like to thank everyone for taking part this year."

She added the contest provided a platform for young poets to creatively express their thoughts and views and said she was looking forward to working with Evie over the coming year.

The 2025 Anthology will be released soon, showcasing a selection of poems from both finalists and other entries.

As Young Poet Laureate, Evie will act as an ambassador for creative writing, aiming to inspire other young people to explore poetry.

She will take part in various projects throughout the year, have her work published and perform at events and festivals.

Visit this story on our website to read Evie's winning poems 'Athena Nike' and 'Contra Mundum - Against Opposition'.



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Leukaemia Care celebrates runners' fundraising efforts at the London Marathon.

Capital gains for charity

MORE than £615,000 was raised for Leukaemia Care by participants in the London Marathon.

A total of 246 runners took to the streets of the capital to bank cash for the charity based in Worcester.

They ran in honour of loved ones affected by leukaemia - those they have lost, those who have survived, and those that have overcome their own personal battles.

This year's marathon saw a record-breaking turnout, with more than 56,000 runners crossing the finish line. The event is expected to raise more than £67 million for countless worthy charities, reinforcing its status as the world's largest single-day annual fundraising event.

Colin Dyer, CEO of Leukaemia Care, said: "We

are incredibly proud of every single runner who took on the London Marathon for Leukaemia Care in challenging conditions.

"The dedication and determination shown was truly inspiring. The funds raised are vital for our mission to support patients and families affected by leukaemia, and to raise awareness about this life-changing illness. Thank you to all who ran, donated, and supported our cause. It really does make a huge difference."

The £615,000 raised will directly contribute to Leukaemia Care's ongoing efforts to provide essential services, support, and information to those impacted by leukaemia across the UK.

Visit www.leukaemiacare.org.uk for more information.

Funding will mean more officers in key roles

A MULTI-MILLION pound funding boost will allow West Mercia Police to hire dozens of new officers into neighbourhood roles over the next year.

Government funding of £3 million will cover the hiring of 31 neighbourhood police officers as well as 20 PCSOs and 15 specials across West Mercia.

Earlier this month, Home Secretary Yvette Cooper announced details of funding for 2025/26 as the start of a four-year Neighbourhood Policing Guarantee programme to bring in 13,000 extra officers by the end of Labour's parliament.

Each force in England and Wales has been allocated a budget based on the Police Funding Formula with West Mercia Police receiving £3,108,283, in line with neighbouring Staffordshire's allocation of £3,014,459.

Speaking on behalf of West Mercia Police Federation, Steve Butler said: "We welcome the Government's plans to boost neighbourhood policing, an area that was severely hit by the budget cuts introduced from 2010, with the

links into our communities being hard hit and public confidence in policing being dented.

"It is vital we rebuild neighbourhood policing and this investment should help get us back on track by putting officers back into the hearts of our communities."

As part of the Government's plans, it wants every neighbourhood in England and Wales to have dedicated teams spending their time on the beat, with guaranteed police patrols in town centres and other hotspot areas at peak times such as Friday and Saturday nights.

In announcing the funding, Ms Cooper said: "The heartbeat of our Great British policing tradition is seeing bobbies on the beat, but for too long, too many communities have been feeling abandoned as crime soared and neighbourhood police disappeared.

"That's why this Government is determined to get police back on the beat and into our town centres.

"It should not matter where you live - everyone deserves local, visible policing they can trust."

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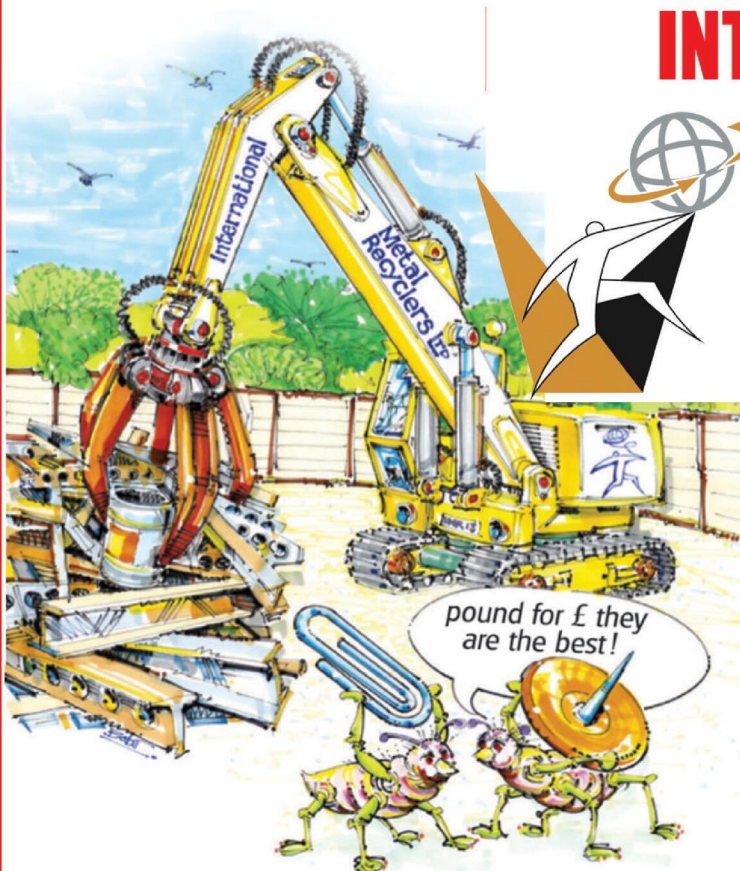
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Severn Valley Railway is set to take you back to the roaring '40s

by **Tristan Harris**
tristan.harris@bullivantmedia.com

THERE will be some rip-roaring fun when the Severn Valley Railway heads back to the 1940s.

The spirit of the British Home Front will be recreated across two weekends in June for the ever-popular Step Back to the 1940s events.

They will take place on the weekends of June 7 and 8 and June 14 and 15 and see plenty of 40s-themed fun with music, dancing, food, displays, vehicles, costumed re-enactors and more.

Visitors will be whisked back in time and are urged to 'dress to the nines' to get into the full spirit of things.

The SVR line is operating along 12 miles between Kidderminster and Hampton Loade, and passengers will be able to hop on and off the exclusively steam-hauled services as they choose.

There are exciting and engaging activities taking place at stations across the line throughout the day, including speeches by Winston Churchill, 1940s singers and dancers, a wartime wedding, vintage vehicles and fun jitterbug sessions.

The Engine House at Highley



will be chock-full of vintage traders, ensuring visitors can fully look the part and experience the era in

style. Meanwhile Kidderminster Town Station hosts a series of living his-

tory displays, including a wartime police station, shops and domestic interiors.

At 1.20pm on June 8, subject to operational availability, there'll be a flypast of the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight's Dakota.

The best place to see this will be at The Engine House, Highley.

The SVR's visitor engagement manager, Lewis Maddox, said: "It's all about celebrating the spirit of the Home Front during wartime and capturing the glamour and style as well as the grit and determination of the country during the 1940s."

"Of course, nowadays, most of our visitors are too young to have experienced those years for themselves, and our events are helping to promote awareness of the Second World War, as a defining period of British history."

"But naturally, we make sure it's great fun for all the family!"

On the evenings of June 7 and 14, Kidderminster Town Station will host a Big Band Show for a party on the platform.

Bridgnorth station is not able to take part in the year's 1940s events, as it remains cut off from the rest of the line by the landslip at Mor Brook bridge.

Visit: svr.co.uk for tickets and more information.

Visitors can 'Step Back to the 1940s' on the Severn Valley Railway next month. Picture by Ken Witherow. s



Kirsty Fisher and Belinda Edwards from Bentleys and Maddison with the Mayor of Stourport, Coun John Thomas. Picture courtesy of Stourport Town Council. s

Shop's VE80 design puts a touch of class in its glass

STAFF at Bentleys and Maddison are celebrating after winning Stourport-on-Severn's best dressed window display competition for the 80th anniversary of VE Day.

The 'Best Dressed Shop Window: VE Day 80' contest was organised by Stourport Town Council and, once entries were submitted, residents voted for their favourite on the 'We Love Stourport Past' and Present Facebook page.

The Mayor of Stourport, Coun John Thomas, presented staff at the store with their winners' certificate yesterday on the anniversary of VE Day.

The Mayor and the council thanked everyone who took part and urged people to go and have a look at all the entries.

The Bentleys and Maddison in Stourport is a family-run independent card and gift shop owned by Stephen and Julie McHale. It sells a range of seasonal cards and gifts, as well as fine Belgian chocolates, Jellycat toys and more.

All the staff, including Kirsty Fisher, Belinda Edwards, Maureen Griffiths and Yvonne Savory, worked together on the window design for the competition

which challenged participants to work to 'A Shared Moment of Celebration' theme which reflected both VE DAY 80 and Stourport-on-Severn.

Kirsty said: "A lot of hard work went into the window, we all came up with ideas and then put them into practice."

"It was lovely to win on such a special and important occasion."

Visit: kidderminsterstandard.co.uk for more stories on the 80th anniversary of VE Day events in Kidderminster, Stourport and Bewdley.

And they will be covered in next week's print edition.

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Caring People, Caring Places: The heartbeat of our community

In every corner of our towns and villages, there's a quiet network of people and places who make care their calling.


From the vet who checks on your family dog like it's their own, to the funeral director who offers gentle guidance during life's most difficult goodbyes, these unsung heroes are woven into the very fabric of our daily lives. This isn't just about care for the elderly – though they are, of course, a cherished part of this picture – but about the many ways compassion shapes our communities, across all ages and walks of life.

At its heart, Caring People, Caring Places is a celebration of humanity. It's about those who dedicate themselves to the wellbeing of others – people who don't just do a job, but perform a service rooted in empathy, patience, and

dignity. Take, for instance, the local solicitor who offers free advice sessions on will writing, ensuring peace of mind for families at any stage of life. It's not just about legalese and paperwork – it's about offering reassurance, answering difficult questions, and helping people plan with clarity and care.

Veterinary clinics also tell a powerful story of compassion. Ask any pet owner and they'll say the vet is a lifeline during tough times – when the dog has eaten something it shouldn't, when the cat needs emergency surgery, or simply when a furry friend is nearing the end of their life. These clinics often extend their care beyond animals, understanding how closely our emotional health is tied to our pets. Many offer grief support and work closely with rehoming charities to give abandoned animals a second chance at love.








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CARING People CARING Places

Speaking of second chances, fostering and adoption services are a profound example of care in action. Across our region, there are families opening their doors – and their hearts – to children who need stability, support, and love. Social workers, carers, and support staff



dedicate their careers to making sure that vulnerable young people find not just shelter, but a sense of belonging.

And while we're on the subject of homes, care homes and supported living facilities continue to provide more than just a roof and regular meals. Many of these places are hubs of life and activity, staffed by people who understand that dignity, independence, and companionship are vital at any age. Increasingly, intergenerational projects and pet therapy schemes are breathing new life into care spaces, offering residents laughter, stimulation, and purpose.

But care doesn't stop at the front door. Funeral directors – some of the most quietly compassionate professionals in our communities – play a deeply important role in helping families navigate loss with grace and respect. Alongside them, stonemasons craft lasting tributes that honour lives lived, with each inscription carved in memory and love. These trades might not often make headlines, but their impact is profound and lasting. And let's not forget the smaller, sometimes overlooked services that make a world of difference. The kennels and catteries that provide safe havens for pets when families are away; the hearing aid specialists who reconnect people to the sounds – and conversations – they've been missing; or the volunteers who give their time to animal shelters and community centres, ensuring no one is forgotten.

These people and places aren't glamorous, and they rarely seek the spotlight. Yet they form a backbone of care and community that deserves



recognition. Their work is local, personal, and essential. They remind us that "care" isn't a service – it's a value. One that's practiced every day in countless acts of kindness, patience, and professionalism.

It might be easy to picture care as something reserved for our oldest citizens – and yes, their needs are crucial – but Caring People, Caring Places shines a light on the broader picture. From children finding safe new homes, to pets being lovingly rehomed, to families finding comfort and support through life's major

transitions, this is a celebration of care in all its forms.

So next time you pass the hearing clinic, walk past the vet's office, or drive by the local foster services banner, pause for a moment. Think of the people inside – doing quiet, tireless work to make someone else's life a little easier, a little warmer, a little more human. Let's support these people, these businesses and these organisations.

Because caring isn't just something we do. It's who we are.

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The Circle of Care: How Support Travels Through a Community

Care has a quiet momentum. It doesn't shout. It doesn't seek credit. But when one person chooses to help another, something remarkable happens – it spreads.

Welcome to the Circle of Care: an invisible, ever-turning wheel powered by acts of kindness, big and small. In towns, villages, and

cities across the country, people are stepping up for each other – and in doing so, sparking a chain reaction of compassion. It often starts with something simple. A hot meal left on a doorstep. A schoolchild giving up their seat on the bus. A stranger paying for the coffee of the person behind them in the queue. These gestures might feel fleeting to the giver, but to the person on the receiving



end, they can be transformative. Not just for what they provide – but for what they inspire. Take the story of a local couple who began cooking extra portions of their evening meals and delivering them to an elderly neighbour

during lockdown. That neighbour, once isolated, began knitting hats and scarves for a women's shelter in return. The shelter staff, moved by the gesture, started offering monthly pop-ups with free toiletries for the homeless.

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And volunteers at those events? Some were recipients of care themselves, now giving back in kind.

This is the Circle of Care in motion. It grows not by obligation, but by invitation. It says: You've helped me – I want to help someone else.

At the heart of this cycle is connection. Care doesn't exist in a vacuum. When we see someone doing good, we're often reminded of our own power to contribute. It's why communities respond so passionately to fundraising pages, food drives, or community clean-up days. They aren't just supporting a cause – they're continuing a story.

And it's not always the obvious moments that carry the most weight. A listening ear. A ride to a doctor's appointment. Watching a neighbour's child for an hour so they can rest. These are small acts – but they build trust, dignity, and belonging. They lay the foundation



Local Facebook groups often help this local newspaper and help act as the new town square – offering everything from babysitting swaps to urgent appeals for missing pets. Behind each post is a person reaching out, and another person reaching back.

And when care flows in a circle, no one is left behind. Those who give today may need help tomorrow. Those who receive today may be the first to offer it next time. It's not a straight line. It's a cycle. A rhythm. A shared responsibility.

So if you've ever wondered whether a small act of kindness really makes a difference – know this: it does. Not just to the person you helped, but to the person they go on to help. And the one after that. And the one after that. Because care is contagious. And once it's set in motion, it rarely stops.

Let's keep it turning.



for a community where people feel safe to both give and receive care.

In schools, children are learning this too. Many are now taking part in kindness challenges – writing positive notes for classmates, helping with litter picks, or raising funds for local charities. Teachers report that once a culture of kindness takes hold, it becomes self-sustaining. “One child brings in a tin for the food bank, and suddenly the whole class is donating,” said one headteacher. “They inspire each other.”

Businesses are joining the circle as well. A bakery offering leftover loaves to a shelter.

A taxi firm giving discounted rides to cancer patients. A florist donating unsold blooms to a hospice. These aren't marketing stunts – they're reflections of what it means to be rooted in community.

But the beauty of the Circle of Care is that you don't need to wait for permission to enter it. You only need to ask: What can I do, right now, with what I have? And that answer will look different for everyone. For some, it's time. For others, it's resources. For many, it's simply attention – noticing when someone is struggling and showing up.

Even digital communities are catching on.



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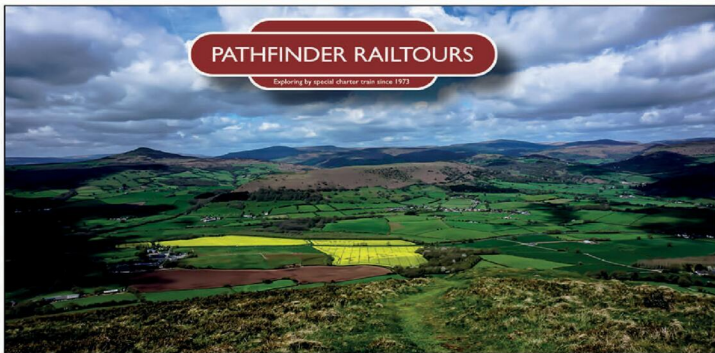
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Our destination for the day will be the county market town of Shrewsbury. Here there will be around 90 minutes* to enjoy the town set in the loop of the River Severn.

A pair of English Electric Class 37 locomotives, courtesy of West Coast Railway Company, are expected to haul this train throughout.

*Subject to change once confirmed timings are received

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Perfect for fans and for those discovering it for the first time

THERE ARE always positives and negatives when staging an iconic piece of theatre or in this case, TV turned stage theatre.

On the one hand, you know you have a great proven script to work with but on the other, the cast are following in very big footsteps. And you have to make sure you do the writing justice and deliver a show that lives up to it.

The talented cast at Droitwich's Norbury Theatre did just that with *Black Adder II*.

Sterling performers

Joanna Edwards was solid in both her roles – as the Young Crone and Guard one.

Also playing more than one role was James Dean. He played three exuberant characters excellently. These included Walter Raleigh, Prince Ludwig (he captured the German accent with aplomb) and the legendary Flashheart (played in the TV show by Droitwich's own equally legendary Rik Mayall).

Christopher De Val Gaunt did well playing two different roles too – Doctor Leech, the Torturer and the crazy (and literally) legless Captain Rum and his comedic rowing boat.

Alisha James was wonderful as aspirational Kate/Bob and Colin Potter complemented her well as

her peasant-like father.

Michael Treagust excelled as the Stephen Fry's subtle clergyman Lord Melchiett and Ellie Higginson made for a brilliant brow-beaten Baldrick.

Christopher Newbould had over-excitable Lord Percy down to a tee.

Vicky Moloney made the role of child-like and brash Queen Elizabeth I her own and Jan Miller-Weir enjoyed plenty of laugh-out-loud moments as the over-sharing and outrageous Nurse. The pair bounced off each other brilliantly on their side-byside throne and chair.

Miller-Weir also doubled up well as the Wisewoman.

While it was hard to pick out a stand-out performance, Zach Price epitomised Lord Edmund Blackadder. He had the voice, intonation mannerisms and facial expressions and must have studied hours of the sitcom to get it that accurate.

Versatile set

The set was versatile and needed to be as with TV adaptations, there are always more set changes needed than when pieces are originally written for stage. The scenery moved well between the Palace, Blackadder's home, a ship

and other settings.

Medieval music – from classical pieces to modern pop songs – were cleverly used to make the scene changes smoother and more audience friendly.

The tracks could almost have come from an album called 'Now That's What I call the ye olde lute'.

The show itself was three episodes from *Black Adder II* – one-and-a-half either side of an interval.

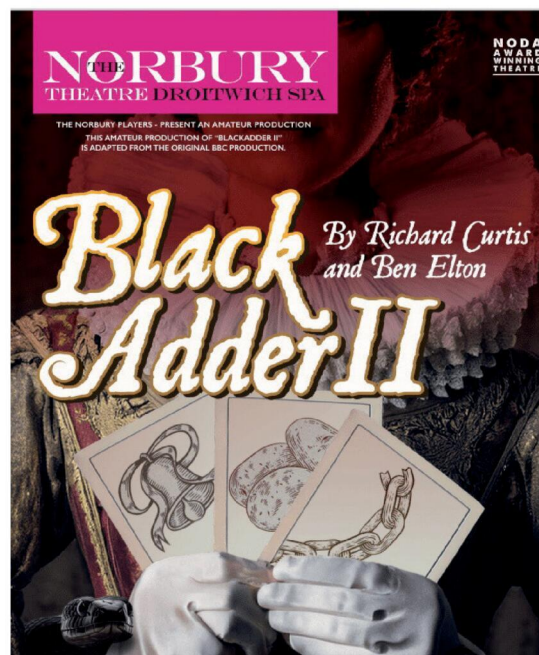
And, such was the quality of this performance, it made you want to go home and revisit the TV show with a binge-watching session.

Black Adder II will be enjoyed by die-hard fans and younger viewers discovering this masterpiece for the first time. Shows run at the Norbury until tomorrow (Saturday, May 10). The final performances are at 7.30pm tonight and at 2.30pm and 7.30pm tomorrow (Saturday).

Visit: norburytheatre.co.uk or call 01905 770154 to book tickets and for more information.

Tristan Harris

Black Adder II runs at Droitwich's Norbury Theatre until tomorrow (Saturday, May 10). s



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Gardening

Tips to create your perfect garden

WHEN it comes to garden design, there are endless possibilities depending on your tastes – and with so many different plants to choose from, it can be hard to know where to start.

To help, the plant team at British Garden Centres (www.britishgardencentres.com) has prepared a guide to the different types of garden styles and how to choose the right one for your outdoor space.

Julian Palphramand, head of plants at British Garden Centres, said: "From classic cottage garden favourites to the wildlife favourites, British Garden Centres and our knowledgeable and friendly plant team is ready to guide you every step of the way, from choosing the right plants to offering expert advice."

Cottage garden

A classic cottage garden is a picture of romance with soft shapes, colourful flowers, and sweet smells filling the air. You can make a beautiful cottage garden with some classic plants, including sweet-smelling lavender. Tall foxgloves, loved by bees, add



Wildflowers are ideal for a low maintenance garden. s

height to your cottage border. The quintessential English rose is the ideal choice for a cottage garden in its many colours and scents, whilst peonies are showstoppers in any planting style.

Tall delphiniums add height, while geraniums and pelargoniums in pink, red, and white fill in the spaces in flower beds or hanging baskets. We also love bell-shaped campanulas and hydrangeas for the cottage feel. Dianthus, with its charming, often sweet-smelling flowers, add old-fashioned charm, whilst wisteria, with its hanging flowers, looks beautiful on pergolas, arches or above porches and doorways.

Contemporary urban garden

City gardens are often small, so you have to choose plants and containers carefully to make the most of the space. Modern urban gardens often feature clean, geometric lines, simple but effective designs, and easy-care plants.

For a touch of the tropics and height, palms provide a dramatic focal point. Low-maintenance succulents, ideal for those with busy lifestyles, come in many varieties and thrive in containers or window boxes. Cannas bring bold foliage and vibrant flowers while shade-loving hostas offer evergreen leaves with



Buddleia will attract butterflies and bees to a wildlife garden. s

varied textures and colours.

Fatsia adds architectural interest with its glossy leaves, whilst architectural grasses bring movement and a modern feel to any outdoor space. Mini conifers are also slow-growing and provide year-round texture and greenery.

Low maintenance garden

Dreaming of a beautiful garden but short on time? A low-maintenance garden doesn't have to be boring. With clever planning and the right choices from British Garden Centres, you can create a vibrant outdoor space that's easy to care for.

flowering geraniums, and sun-loving rudbeckia?

For a wilder look, a wildflower garden requires very little time and care. Sow seeds with varieties like ox-eye daisy, corn poppy, cornflower, and corn marigold.

Wildlife garden

Gardens provide vital habitats for wildlife, and connecting with nature is proven to boost mental well-being. Pollinating insects are declining, so you can help to support them by planting nectar-rich flowers that offer a continuous food supply from spring onwards.

We recommend a selection of plants, including lavender, an early summer favourite for bees; foxgloves, which are a favourite for solitary bees; sunflowers, which provide summer vibrance for pollinators; and dahlias, a late-season nectar source for insects. Poppies offer ample pollen, while buddleia will attract butterflies and bees. Salvia bloom for months, sedum provides late summer and autumn food source and colour, verbenas attract bees and butterflies with its long flowering period, and rosemary offers nectar-rich flowers into late autumn and can even be used in cooking.

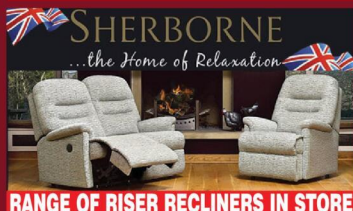
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Bookcase

All the latest books reviewed

THE FIRST four months of the year have been filled with reading.

In an effort to reduce my screen time and get through my constantly growing 'to be read' pile, I have had my nose in a book for most of the year.

Although I have been making my way through the collection, I could not help but buy some new releases - so here are the best books of 2025 so far.

1. The Rewrite by Lizzie Damilola Blackburn



The story starts with Temi and Wale meeting in London. They flirt, date, meet each other's friends - then Wale dumps Temi to go on Love Villa, a fictional version of Love Island.

Instead of giving in to heartbreak, Temi throws herself into her writing. She's within touching distance of a book deal that would solve all her problems.

But publishers keep passing on her novel and bills still have to be

paid. So, when the opportunity to ghost-write a celebrity autobiography arises, Temi finds herself accepting.

And, of course, the celebrity turns out to be Wale.

This novel blends sharp humor with heartfelt insight, wrapped in Blackburn's warm, conversational style.

Readers will find themselves rooting for the protagonist through every twist of career reinvention, romantic mishap, and moment of growth.

A perfect pick for fans of contemporary fiction that's both laugh-out-loud funny and emotionally resonant.

2. Great Big Beautiful Life by Emily Henry



Emily Henry is one of the all time greats, I seldom go on holiday without ensuring I have one of her novels with me, and this is no different.

Great Big Beautiful Life takes a slight detour from Henry's usual romantic com-

edy roots and leans into a more introspective, emotionally rich narrative.

While still filled with Henry's signature wit and sparkling dialogue, this novel delves deeper into themes of grief, self-discovery, and what it means to live a life of meaning and connection.

The book centres around Alice Scott, a writer who is still dreaming of her big break, and Hayden Anderson a Pulitzer-prize winning human thundercloud.

They are both on Little Crescent Island for the same reason - to write the biography of a woman no-one has seen in years.

But only one of them will get the chance to have their work published.

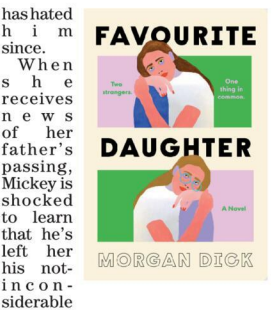
If you come for the romance, you'll stay for the profound emotional arcs and the tender way Henry explores the beauty and chaos of everyday life.

It's a refreshing and heartfelt read that proves Henry can master more than just a swoon-worthy love story.

3. Favourite Daughter by Morgan Dick

The novel focuses around Mickey and Arlo, half-sisters who have never met.

Arlo adored her father - but always lived in the shadow of his personality and burdensome vices. Meanwhile, their father abandoned Mickey and her mother years ago, and Mickey



has hated him since.

When she receives news of her father's passing, Mickey is shocked to learn that he's left her his not-inconsiderable fortune, but Mickey must attend a series of therapy sessions before the money can be released.

Unbeknownst to either woman, the psychologist Mickey's father has ensured she meets with is her half sister, Arlo.

Working together as therapist and patient—with no idea that they're in fact sisters - Arlo and Mickey soon get under each other's skin.

With a voice that is deeply vulnerable, Dick captures the undercurrents of sibling rivalry, maternal pressure, and the blurred lines between love and obligation.

A must-read for fans of literary fiction with a dark, intimate edge.

4. Famous Last Words by Gillian McAllister

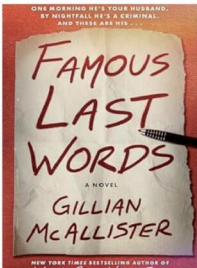
An author who is the Queen of gripping psychological thriller, McAllister once again takes readers

on another journey exploring guilt, truth, and the haunting power of hindsight.

The plot follows new mother Camilla as her life changes forever. After months of maternity leave, she will drop her infant daughter off at daycare for the first time and return to her job as a literary agent.

But, when she wakes, her husband Luke is not there. He is in central London in the middle of a hostage situation - not as a hostage as the gunman.

As the narrative moves backward through time - a technique



McAllister mastered in Wrong Place, Wrong Time - Famous Last Words becomes a forensic excavation of motive and morality.

What starts as a mystery quickly transforms into an exploration of character - what we say in the moment, what we wish we said, and what it means to truly know someone.

Fans of smart, structurally inventive thrillers will find this one utterly addictive.



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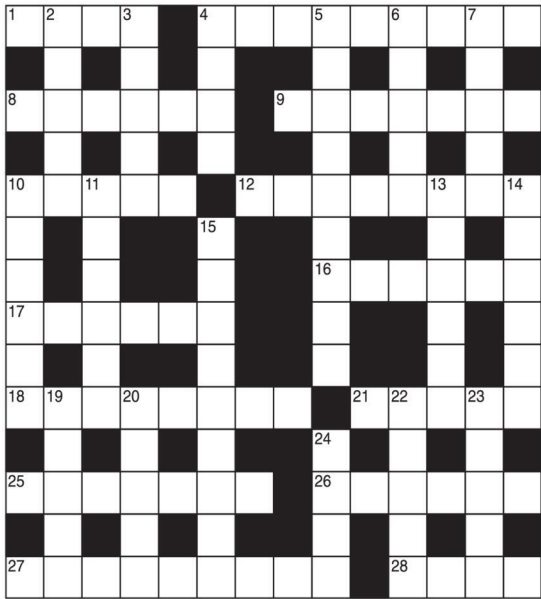
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GENERAL KNOWLEDGE CROSSWORD

- ACROSS**
- 1 & 4 Down Hero of a famous hunting song (4,4)
- 4 Spiny rodent (9)
- 8 Surname of the writer famous for Peter Pan (6)
- 9 Disease-causing bacterium (7)
- 10 Any levy of one-tenth (5)
- 12 Greek Cynic philosopher (8)
- 16 In Wagner's opera, lover of Tristan (6)
- 17 Jean ---, director of such films as La Bete Humaine (6)
- 18 & 14 Down British architect of works including Coventry Cathedral (3,5,6)
- 21 12th part of a pound troy (5)
- 25 & 13 Down Viscount and naval hero born in 1758 (7,6)
- 26 Day of the week named after the goddess Freya (6)
- 27 Putting together of elements to make up a complex whole (9)
- 28 Greek letter i (4)



- DOWN**
- 2 African ruminant mammal (5)
- 3 Oliver, US soldier who resigned over the Iran-Contra affair (5)
- 4 See 1 Across
- 5 Hooped petticoat used to expand the skirt of a dress (9)
- 6 Pulp of cooked vegetable or fruit (5)
- 7 Person of exalted rank (5)
- 10 Sign of the zodiac (6)
- 11 Slang for a sixpence (6)
- 13 See 25 Across
- 14 See 18 Across
- 15 Former English county which was once divided into Ridings (9)
- 19 & 23 Down Republic officially known as Cote D'Ivoire (5,5)
- 20 Leaf that bears a flower in its axil (5)
- 22 Stanley 'found' Livingstone here in 1871 (5)
- 23 See 19 Down
- 24 Another name for newts (4)

SOLUTIONS

General Knowledge Crossword

ACROSS: 1 John; 4 Porcupine; 8 Barrie; 9 Micrrobe; 10 Tithie; 12 Diogenes; 16 isolate; 17 Renoir; 18 Sir Basil; 21 Ounce; 25 Horatio; 26 Puree; 7 Noble; 10 Taurus; 11 Tanager; DOWN: 2 Okapi; 3 North; 4 Peel; 5 Crinoline; 6 Puree; 7 Noble; 10 Taurus; 11 Tanager; 13 Nelson; 14 Spence; 15 Yorkshire; 19 Ivory; 20 Bract; 22 Ujiji; 23 Coast; 24 Efts.

Crossword

ACROSS: 1 Herminiscence; 7 Drear; 8 Incur; 9 Eve; 10 Sacrillege; 11 Assent; 12 Tanff; 15 Elucidate; 17 Ash; 18 Rouse; 19 Abuse; 21 Clothes-horse; Down: 1 Rio de Janeiro; 2 Neep; 3 Strict; 4 Eliminate; 5 Cache; 6 Free of charge; 7 Dregs; 10 Sentiment; 13 Inane; 14 Vacate; 16 Usual; 20 Ugh.

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Wordwheel Pathfinder

24=S, 25=R, 26=B
17=O, 18=W, 19=E, 20=L, 21=L, 22=Q, 23=F, 10=T, 11=A, 12=D, 13=V, 14=P, 15=M, 16=L, 1=H, 2=N, 3=Y, 4=K, 5=G, 6=X, 7=C, 8=W, 9=U.

Hide, Side, Site, Sits, Sets, Sees, Seek.

Ladder

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

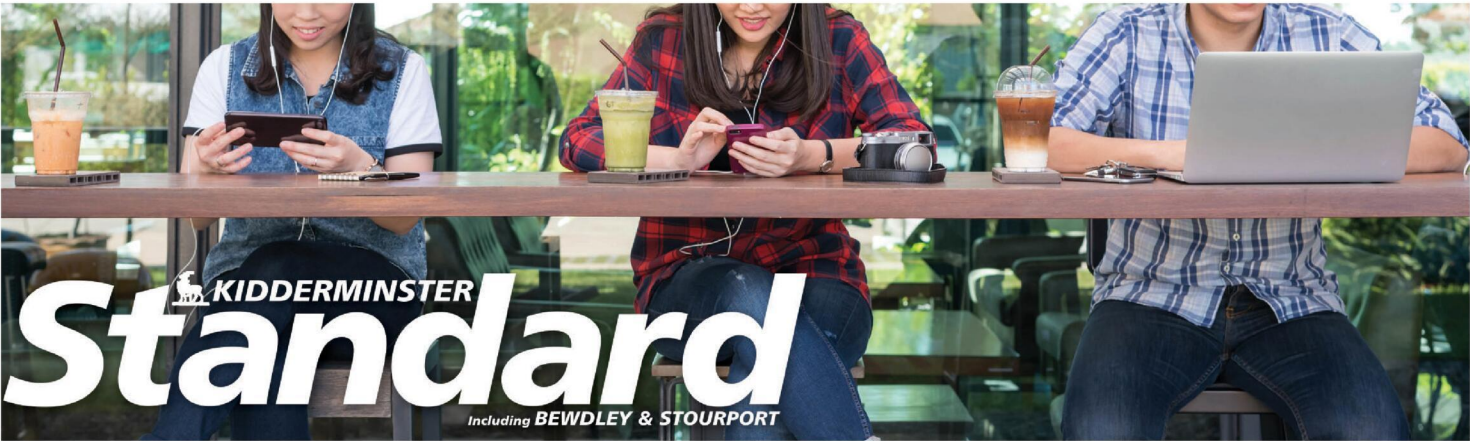
8	3	4	9	1	2	5	7	6
9	6	2	3	5	4	4	1	8
7	1	5	4	8	6	3	2	9
1	7	3	2	9	8	6	5	4
2	5	9	6	4	1	7	8	3
4	8	6	5	7	3	1	9	2
6	4	7	1	2	9	8	3	5
5	9	1	8	3	4	2	6	7
3	2	8	7	6	5	9	4	1

Hard

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

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Celebrating 70 years of Suzuki

THIS Autumn, as Suzuki gets ready to launch the Vitara, it's very first electric vehicle, it's well worth reflecting on where it all began for Suzuki Motor Corporation 70 years ago.

Back in the Autumn of 1955, Michio Suzuki personally delivered a Suzulight, his very first production car to a local doctor who had previously been conducting his house calls on a bicycle.

Although Michio Suzuki had first started in business much earlier than that in March 1920 with the manufacture of textile looms.

These became more advanced in design and very popular right through to the early 1950's when there was a global decline in the cotton industry; Suzuki then decided to diversify into motorised transport with introduction of its first motorcycle in 1953 and the first car followed two years later.

Initial research and development of Suzulight began as far back as 1937 although this had to be shelved later with the outbreak of the second World War. This development finally resumed in 1954 when Suzuki Motor Co Limited was formed.

Using Suzuki's 'Yaramaika' spirit, (translated as 'Let's do it') which was deep in the root of the Enshu region where Suzuki originated together with his determination to drive forward, Michio Suzuki quickly began

researching vehicles produced overseas and gained a wealth of knowledge.

Suzulight was a compact vehicle measuring less than three metres in length and weighing just over 500kg. It was powered by a 360cc, 15PS two cylinder, two-stroke engine which was the first of its type to ever be fitted to a car.

It was also the first car in Japan to feature a Front Wheel Drive / Front engine layout and was way ahead of its time with its independent coil spring suspension and rack and pinion steering.

Suzulight easily met the Japanese 'Keijidosha' or Kei light car legislation and Suzuki and his team quickly began their first development road testing of it.

As a prototype, its most memorable early drive was a 300km trip across the Hakone mountainous region between Hamamatsu and Tokyo which proved very challenging on roads that had not yet been paved.

Although arriving very late in the evening, the team arrived to present the car to the President of 'Yanase Auto' Japan's leading authority on Automobiles.

The President had stayed on late to greet the team and made his way out to thoroughly test the car.

Several hours later he returned very impressed and immediately gave Suzuki full

approval to put the Suzulight into production.

Production commenced in October 1955 with initial production of 3-4 cars per month but by early 1956 monthly volume had climbed to 30 units.

70 years on, Suzuki Motor Corporation remains globally renowned as the 'small car experts' and produces well over three million

units per year with a projection of four million units annually by 2030.

Michio Suzuki's original strategy of design and production of lightweight vehicles lives on with platforms including 'Heartect' used in Swift, Vitara and S-Cross models and 'Heartect-e' which was specifically designed for the Vitara.

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Brown slams players in final interview as Harriers boss



Phil Brown's reign as Kidderminster Harriers boss has come to an end. Picture courtesy of clivejonespr.com

by Aaron Sutcliffe
aaron.sutcliffe@bullivantmedia.com

FOOTBALL: PHIL Brown claimed the Kidderminster Harriers players 'could not handle the pressure' of the play-offs in his last interview as Harriers boss.

Kidderminster lost 2-1 against Chester at Aggborough in the National League North play-off semi-finals in what proved to be the 65-year-old's final game at the helm.

The club parted company with Brown just days after the Chester defeat as Harriers failed to achieve promotion despite sitting top of the table on the final day of the season.

And Brown questioned the mentality of his players following the

play-off semi-final defeat against Chester.

Brown said: "There's highs and lows and there's a winner and a loser and unfortunately we've been on the losing end of two poor performances from us.

"Chester were resilient, well-organised, well versed to change and better than us at second balls which is something I find hard to believe.

"You can praise the opposition but you've got to give criticism to your own - myself included.

"The criticism comes in the way of being able to handle yourself on the bigger stage and it's always the last game of the season.

"We haven't stepped up to the plate, we haven't been able to handle the pressure.

"If you don't step up to the plate in these moments, then you're never

going to step up to the plate and that's what has happened in the last couple of games.

"There are no words of wisdom, we have to understand why we lost the game. When the pressure was cranked up, we didn't respond.

"We were responsible for getting it to the last game of the season but to not conduct yourself in the manner you have done is unacceptable."

"To have players that can't handle pressure is something I have to look at deeply with regards to next season."

Brown appeared to suggest he was willing to remain with Harriers next season when quizzed about his future.

The now former Harriers boss had 12 months left on his contract before he and the club parted ways.

Speaking after the Chester defeat, Brown added: "I don't believe in the contract situation, as far as I'm concerned my record speaks for itself.

"At this level, it's understandable, it's totally different, I must admit I really have enjoyed it.

"But these moments are the ones you have to understand what it takes to win a game of football and get it over the line and win promotion.

"The bottom line is, you've got to judge players when push comes to shove.

"We started pushing and shoving in the last 12 to 14 games.

"But when push comes to shove it was Southport and I can't be working with that kind of mentality.

"I have to work with a mentality that can actually get it over the line."

Play-off heartbreak for Kiddy against Chester

KIDDERMINSTER Harriers suffered a heartbreaking 2-1 defeat to Chester in their National League North play-off semi-final, writes Neil Gordon.

Harriers took an early lead through Kyle Morrison's opener at Aggborough but it was not enough to see them through to the final against Scunthorpe United, and the Reds will again be playing National League North football next season.

For Chester, Dylan Mottley-Henry grabbed a first-half equaliser and Declan Weeks scored a stunning late winner, after Kurt Willoughby's penalty had been brilliantly saved by Harriers goalkeeper Christian Dibble.

A crowd of 4,647 watched Phil Brown's men fall to defeat for the second game running after their agonising 2-1 loss at Southport, which denied them the title and automatic promotion back to the National League.

Morrison gave Kidderminster the lead when he steered home from point-blank range at the back post from a corner to send Aggborough wild after 18 minutes.

Zak Brown could have given the hosts an earlier lead but his left foot shot whizzed past the Chester bar with just three minutes on the clock.

The visitors equalised with their first real sight of goal when Mottley-Henry swept home a loose ball after Harriers goalkeeper Dibble had palmed away a long-range Connor Woods shot.

Both sides had chances to go in

front in the closing stages of the first-half with Chester's Willoughby striding down the left and firing past the near post, while Harriers Maz Kouhyar found himself in front of goal but unable to finish.

After the interval, Harriers were put to the test by a transformed Chester side that started the second-half looking to get the job done.

The visitors had a glorious chance to take the lead from the penalty spot after Morrison fouled Iwan Murray inside the box, but Dibble superbly beat away Willoughby's fierce spot kick.

On the hour mark Kidderminster's leading hitman Ashley Hemmings shot wide as both teams went for goal and treated the supporters to a thrilling passage of play.

Harriers survived a scare on 77 minutes when Chester substitute Dan Mooney went through and knocked the ball past the outrushing Dibble, but he over hit it and the ball went out.

And just four minutes later the visitors booked their place in the play-off final when Weeks sent a glorious curling shot inside the back post from the edge of the box, to send the Chester contingent wild.

Despite 10 minutes of stoppage time Harriers were unable to find an equaliser and force extra time, and the game, and the season, ended for Kidderminster with the players falling to the ground heartbroken in defeat.

ALARM AND FIRE PROTECTION EXPERTS COVERING THE WEST MIDLANDS

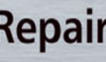
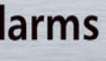
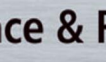
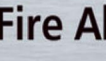
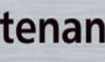
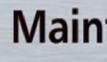
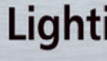
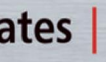
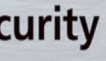


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