GREEN BELT IS UNDER THREAT

A COUNCILLOR has warned ‘there is a genuine risk’ Halesowen green belt land could be built on to meet a shortage of new homes.

A total of 22,000 homes are needed to meet the growing needs of the population in the Black Country by 2036.

The Save Halesowen Countryside Campaign has been set up to fight the pressure on the green belt. Campaigners are worried that as many as 5,500 new homes need to be found across Dudley borough, many in Halesowen.

The shortfall was identified in the Black Country Core Strategy report, a document by Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton.

COUNCILLOR Harley – tough decisions

Council leader Patrick Harley said: “There is certainly a risk. I have spoken with 12 councillors who represent Halesowen wards and we have all put up opposition to any plans on the green belt in Halesowen.

“Council members, from three different political parties, are all very clear in our opposition to any plans to develop areas of Halesowen’s greenbelt.”

Develop

“Dudley borough is actually exceeding housing needs aimed at 2036, meaning there are no ‘exceptional circumstances’ needed to build on green land, as laid out in national guidelines.

Nick Freer, campaign group leader, said land at risk could include sites in Lapal, Cowmes Wood, Ladyley and Halesowen Green. He added: “All of these are along the southern fringes of Halesowen, stretching from junction 3 (M6) to approaching Halesoway, which is beautiful countryside.”

Dudley Council leader Patrick Harley said building on green belt was ‘very much a last resort’ but ‘some tough decisions will have to be made.’

He said no ‘firm decisions’ have been made and it was ‘too early to talk about specific locations’. Councillor Harley added: “Making the most of brownfield land is a high priority for us.”

PERFORMERS are set to bring a Dolly Parton hit to life on the stage.

Members of the Amberley Operatic Society – known as CHAOS – are putting the finishing touches to their production of 9 to 5 The Musical, which runs from November 14 to 18 at Stourbridge Town Hall.

Michelle Cassells, one of the actors, said: “It’s all starting to come together now. It’s very funny, fast-moving. It’s really good fun.”

The show, featuring music and lyrics by the country/pop music sensation, is based on the 1980 movie of the same name, about three office workers who turn the tables on their sexist boss.

Cameo

And Dolly herself will be putting in a cameo appearance via a projection of the Grammy Award winner, who will introduce the characters and lead the audience in a sing-along of the blockbuster title tune.

Tickets, which start from £14, can be purchased by calling the box office on 0121 585 7380. CHAOS, which is longest established amateur operatic society in the Black Country, moved to its new base in Stourbridge earlier this year after more than 50 years at Brierley Hill Civic Hall.

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Here at Jordans Solicitors we offer, Conveyancing both Residential and Commercial, Wills and Probate, Powers of Attorney & Family Law...
QUEEN of the Black Country Doreen Tipton is hoping to be immortalised in art – and is looking for budding portrait artists to take on the challenge.

The self-styled Lazy Cow has even arranged a sitting – though it will probably be more of a ‘lying’ – for those who would like to draw her.

The shortlisted entries, to be decided by a panel of judges, will be featured in the Chronicle’s sister paper, the Express and Star, and go on display at Wolverhampton Art Gallery.

And the winning entry, which will be unveiled in a Doreen video, will later be auctioned off by Antiques Roadshow expert Will Farmer.

Professionals, students and amateur artists can enter. Age is no barrier to the competition even has a children’s section for under-15s.

The judging panel will include Mr Farmer, who will auction off the winner at his auction rooms in Stourbridge, Tess Radcliffe, curatorial and learning manager at the art gallery, Doreen and writer David Tristram.

Doreen has already been painted by Derek Powell-Jones of Rugeley. It is now hanging up on the wall in The Rugeley Rose Theatre.

The still-life sitting at the art gallery is planned for November 25. Spaces are limited to around 15 people but a second sitting may be organised if there is enough interest. To register and get more details email lazycow@doreen.tv

On course for success at college open days

PROSPECTIVE students will be able to check out courses at Halesowen College during open days tomorrow (Friday) and Saturday.

The events are taking place at the Whittingham Road campus between 4pm and 8pm on Friday and 10am to 4pm on Saturday.

The college’s range of courses will be on show for students considering enrolling.

Bosse have spent £20 million upgrading facilities in recent years including a Film Performing Arts Centre. Coombe Wood campus has been transformed into an Advanced Science and Technology Centre.

Meanwhile, five students studying Travel and Tourism have been nomi

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**Revamp as pub aims to be famous for dinners**

A PUB in Halesowen will undergo a £38,000 revamp, creating seven new jobs.

The work will take place at The Cobham Arms in Howley Grange Road lasting eight weeks, with its grand re-opening set for December 8.

Both bars will be refurbished at the Marion's owned pub.

Scott McGeeough, who runs the pub alongside his partner Hayley Bishop, said: “It has been fantastic to take on this lovely community pub – we’ve known all our lives – and even better to oversee this fantastic facelift.

“We want to keep it as a much-loved community pub but have plans to build the food side of the business and to become famous for our Sunday roasts, as well as organising some great entertainment nights too.

“The rearg is being converted into a family-friendly 80-seater restaurant and the front bar will be catering more for drinkers and community events.

The kitchen will be upgraded to offer a classic pub menu.

Marston’s area manager Tom Madison added: “This is one of the biggest investments we have made this year and it will make a vast improvement to the pub. We wish Scott and Hayley all the best!”

The couple have 12 years experience in the pub trade.

**Travellers’ camp location sought**

An emergency holding camp for evicted travellers has been brought forward by Dudley Council bosses are thrashing out plans for a transit site in the borough and Cosley is believed to be on the shortlist.

Councillor Paul Brathwaite, UKIP group leader in Dudley said: “It is my understanding we have made this at Cosley. Unfortunately we can’t send them to another borough. We have to have one in the borough.”

Cosley East Ward councillor Star Anstond said chiefs should prepare for battle over any plans put forward for Cosley.

Council leader Patrick Harley said: “We are currently considering a range of locations and will be reporting findings back to councillors.”

**Coffee morning**

A COFFEE morning is being held aid of the Royal British Legion at H. Cope Limited Funeral Directors in Cradley Heath on Friday, October 20, 10am. Call 01384 569388 for details.

**Community urged to vote for park gym**

CAMPAIGNERS are asking the community to show their support behind a project for an outdoor gym in a park as it bids for funding.

Friends of Hawne Park, in Halesowen, is competing for funding from the Ariva Community Fund 2017 and needs the public’s help, as only the top voted projects are in with a chance of winning.

The submission has already been granted from Dudley Council and the group needs £10,000 of financial support to make the free gym a reality.

A consultation took place with the community on what improvements they would like to see at the park. The outdoor gym and children’s play area were among the ideas.

Dan Rudge, group vice-chairman, said: “The gym will be half funded by people to get it fit and active. So far it has received more than 500 votes. To vote for the project visit community-fund.ariva.co.uk/voting and select the project.

Paul Thurlow, group chairman, added: “We’ll also be looking to improve other things around the park in the New Year.”
**Councillors pledge to fight bid for boundary changes**

THREE councillors have launched a campaign to block proposed boundary changes they say would ‘rip the heart out’ of Dudley.

Under Boundary Commission plans unveiled last month, part of Dudley town centre and neighbourhoods to its east would be placed in a new Sandwell constituency stretching almost 10 miles to Birmingham. Councillors in St Thomas ward – which includes Kates Hill, Buffery Park, Oakham and Blowers Green – are urging businesses, charities, community groups and residents to oppose the plans.

Councillors Shazakat Ali, Steve Waltho and Shamina Mughal made their views clear in a joint statement. They said: “We think these proposals are terrible for the community we serve and the businesses in the town centre we represent.”

**Conveying success to winner Hollie**

A WOMAN from Halesowen is celebrating after winning an award for being Best Young Conveyancer of the Year.

Hollie Downs took home the prize at the annual Law Firm Services Conference & Awards 2017. She was shortlisted and was presented with the award from the legal aspects of buying and selling property.

**Future bright for Haden Cross pub**

The Haden Cross pub, between Halesowen and Old Hill, which is now due for a refurbishment after being taken over by a new Sandwell constituency stretching almost 10 miles to Birmingham. Councillors in St Thomas ward – which includes Kates Hill, Buffery Park, Oakham and Blowers Green – are urging businesses, charities, community groups and residents to oppose the plans.

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A MAJOR project bringing together the Midland Metro extension and light rail centre development in a Black Country town will cost half-a-million pounds more than expected.

A 250-metre concrete retaining wall is due to be built next to Tipton Road in Dudley but will now cost £4.33m rather than the initial £3.8m estimate following a ‘review’ of construction costs. Dudley Council will be applying for funding to pay for the scheme.

Councillor Ian Kettle, cabinet member for economic growth and development, said: “We are all pleased that they have recognised real improvement since our previous inspection two years ago.

The trust was rated ‘requires improvement’ for being safe and responsive, but was ‘outstanding’ for being caring and ‘good’ for being well-led. End of life care was also said to be ‘outstanding’.

Competent

The results of the inspection take in A&E, medical and surgical services, end of life care, outpatient services and the Birmingham Midland Eye Centre.

It comes at a crucial time for the trust as it prepares for the opening of the new £350 million Midland Metro-Birmingham Hospital in spring 2019.

The CQC’s chief inspector of hospitals, Professor Ted Baker, said: “Although some improvements had been noted since our previous from October 2014, the trust had not made all the necessary changes.”

Toby Lewis, Trust chief executive, said: “We are all pleased that they recognised real improvement since the Trust was inspected in 2014. I am delighted with the rating for our innovative partnership for end of life care.”

Rail project

Wall costing £500m

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CARE at Rowley Regis Hospital has been labelled ‘inadequate’ by the health watchdog. The quality and levels of staff on wards at Sandwell and City Hospitals has also been identified as a concern.

Inspectors from the Care Quality Commission have now ordered Sandwell and West Birmingham NHS Trust to make improvements. The Trust has been rated as ‘requires improvement’ overall – meaning it keeps the same tag from its previous inspection two years ago.

Inspectors singled out community inpatient services at Rowley Regis Hospital in Moor Lane as “inadequate because of lack of mental health capacity assessments, poor care planning and inconsistent assessment of risk.”

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We bought diesels believing they were better for planet

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 actress Sian Webber – no such historical character as Lady Dorothy

Doggy TV subtitiles – one reader recalls ‘Cold Daddy’ for Colonel Gadaffi

Prime Minister Theresa May faces a dilemma over the Chancellor

T for Toxic maybe, but they won’t stay
I believe that the UK should seriously prepare for a Brexit that involves leaving the EU. I draw this conclusion from considering press reports of the mood of the current negotiations between the UK and EU representatives. Our negotiators offer ways forward and the EU negotiators reject them. They say we are not offering enough to satisfy the future of EU citizens, how the UK/Eire border will work and how to leave the EU.

In view of our membership of the EU for the last few decades this is, surely, the correct way to proceed, however, this would go against the main tenet of EU membership which is free trade = no movement and they know only too well that the UK voted to leave the EU primarily to bring control of immigration back to our shores.

We also have to consider, especially in relation to recent comments from Mr Juncker, that the unelected that control the EU are constantly seeking to establish a single European establishment with common taxes, common laws and an EU army. Negotiating free trade agreements is not their primary concern anymore!

Michael Callinde, Kingswinford

Dear Editor,

More begging on streets than ever

Is it just me or does the number of people begging in Dudley town centre increase by the week? Over the past few weeks it’s got worse and worse, people openly begging asking for money and cigarettes, sat in disused shop doorways.

Now don’t get me wrong, I know full well that people fall on hard times through one reason or another, but you don’t want to keep seeing and being subjected to this whilst trying to do a bit of shopping.

Surely there’s some organisation or other that can help them to save them having to resort to this way of life just to survive! No wonder there’s so many empty shops in the town, potential shop owners must come along and see these unfortunate people begging on the street and in shop doorways and think, ‘just say, don’t look too good does it?’

Lee Thomas, Brierley Hill

MAY I please respond to Alan T Harrison’s reply to my recent letter regarding our trade deficit with the EU?

Perhaps I should just refer to him as Harrison as he does not refer to my letter, or indeed Roger Watts either, by using anything other than just a surname.

I am not exactly sure just what Harrison means by proportionality, but having weaved his complex web of calculations that supposedly demolish my argument, none of it can refute the established fact that in trade we are in deficit to the EU to the extent of approximately 400 billion per annum, and this fact should give the UK negotiators a strong hand.

With regard to a trade deal, the common sense outcome for all concerned would, of course, be for the UK and the EU to continue to trade within a free trade area, without payment of a fee on either side.

M B Willis ACIB, Wombourne

Let’s just cut our EU losses now

I am not exactly sure just what Harrison means by proportionality, but having weaved his complex web of calculations that supposedly demolish my argument, none of it can refute the established fact that in trade we are in deficit to the EU to the extent of approximately 400 billion per annum, and this fact should give the UK negotiators a strong hand.

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Carers and support staff form a professional, compassionate team, and services and all comply with stringent conditions set by the Care Quality Commission, the independent body that regularly inspects all care homes in England.

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Beechcroft Residential Home
Salop Drive, Oldbury
West Midlands B68 9AG
T: 0121 429 2993

Grange Hill House
516 Bromsgrove Road, Hunnington
Halesowen, West Midlands B62 0JU
T: 0121 550 1312

The Carlton Care Group has been providing professional, high quality care services for over 30 years through its award-winning residential care homes across the West Midlands.

Each Care Home comprises a team of qualified, caring professionals who understand that each resident’s individual dignity and welfare is paramount. Our Care Homes provide a variety of first class facilities and services and all comply with stringent conditions set by the Care Quality Commission, the independent body that regularly inspects all care homes in England.

Lapal House boasts a licenced bar in a separate room with a cinema style area and a classic car collection for residents to view.

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EU blocking Brexit progress, so move on

To the Editor

Take a slice segment through the earth and you get a wheel. At the centre, is the hub and on the outside, the rim. If you upset the balance, you get trouble. So my thoughts are speaking from the mind.

For many years, man has been taking from the centre of the earth coal, oil, etc and making concrete and tarmac structures. All adding height and weight to the surface of the earth causing it to spin faster. Are my thoughts far out from what is happening?

Peter Cole
Kingswinford

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Lee Thomas, Brierley Hill
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Hundreds turn out for tragic Megan’s funeral

A FUNERAL service has been held for Megan Bills – the ‘vibrant’ and ‘wonderful’ 17-year-old whose body was found in a clingfilm-wrapped wardrobe.

More than 200 people turned out at St James Church in Wollaston on Monday to say a final farewell to the hairdresser from Steebrige.

The ceremony came five months after she was discovered dead at a hostel in Highgate Road, Brierley Hill.

Westliffe song ‘I’ll See You Again’ played out as mourners entered the church where Megan’s wicker coffin was placed at the front draped in flowers.

Reverend Nick Kalsiuk began by telling how Megan was born in Coventry and was brought up by adoptive parents Dawn and Martin Bills in Steebrige with her brother James.

She went to St James Primary School in the town. She became a dedicated member of the church choir while going on to pursue a career as a hairdresser, was a privileged member of the church choir, and loved animals – especially dolphins.

She described how the teenager would dress up and put on make-up to go out one minute, only to then join in a game of football outside the next. She also loved going on holiday even wearing her bikini under her clothes on the way there just to jump in the sea at the earliest opportunity.

The service also heard a tribute from her family, saying: “She was loved by everyone who knew her.”

Ashley Foster, aged 24, of no fixed address, was arrested and charged in connection with Megan’s death. He has admitted one count of preventing a burial but denied a charge of murder.

He is due to stand trial in January.

Adventures

Rev Diana Farmer then read out a tribute from her family, saying: “She played flute beautifully, cooked the best cakes, had an amazing talent in her profession as a hairdresser, was kind and caring to people of all ages and loved animals – especially dolphins.”

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The hearse arrives at St James Church in Wollaston for the funeral of Megan in the sea at the earliest opportunity. “Dawn, Martin and James said what a privilege and honour it was to have been a part of her life, there were lots of adventures along the way,” Rev Farmer added.

The service also heard a tribute from Megan’s former foster carer Jenny, who said: “She was loved by everyone who knew her.”

A recruitment advertisement for a child care assistant in Commonwealth’s Sohor home in the West Midlands also stated that Megan had been a part of her life, there were lots of adventures along the way.

Rev Farmer added. “Graham gave us our perfect kitchen, a great local company.”

Hagley Kitchens created the kitchen we have always dreamed of, and his team completed the installation and tiling to a perfect finish. “Nothing was too much trouble” Doreen Coley - Hayley Green

“Hagley Kitchens took care of everything in our fantastically designed modern kitchen...Graham and his team made everything simple.” Pam & Steve Hughes, Rowley Regis

Phyllis Andrews, aged 24, of no fixed address, was arrested and charged in connection with Megan’s death. He has admitted one count of preventing a burial but denied a charge of murder.

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It’s no joke! Without West Brom lad Larry comedy would be very different

HE was the boy from the Black Country who helped to transform post-war British comedy.

Writing for entertainment giant Tony Hancock and co-creating The Goon Show, Larry Stephens had a way with words that seemed to resonate with an audience.

But his tragic death at the age of just 35 means his name is not as familiar as the likes of his peers Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers. Eager for the writer’s contribution to the world of comedy to be fully appreciated, Julie Warren, who is Larry’s first cousin, once removed, has written a book about his life.

“He deserves for more people to know what he did because without him British comedy would have been very different,” said the 49-year-old. Larry was born in West Bromwich in 1923 and by the age of four had moved to Quinton where he attended Quinton Infant and Junior School and then Birmingham Central Grammar School before starting work as an estate agent’s clerk.

His first love was music and he was a jazz pianist with Dennis Hinton and His Band at venues across the Midlands. In 1942, the band enjoyed success in a competition organised by Melody Maker magazine, which took them to the regional heats held at Wolverhampton’s Civic Hall.

His musical career was interrupted by the Second World War. He was an officer with the British Commandos and served in Burma and India, where he would spend his spare time writing plays in his role as entertain ment officer for his unit. After the war, he finished his service in 1947 and returned home to Quinton before moving to London.

“He met an agent called Phyllis Rounce, who represented Tony Hancock, and she thought they would get on well. Larry ended up becoming one of the his main writers and also introduced him to his first wife Cicely Romanis,” said Julie.

“He was best man at the wedding and a few days later Larry married out-of-town model Diana Forster and Tony and Cicely were witnesses at the wedding,” she added. It was Hancock who introduced him to Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe, Spike Milligan and Michael Bentine. Apart from The Goon Show, Larry also wrote for TV’s top-rated The Army Game and created scripts for Hancock on stage, as well as his ATV series, The Tony Hancock Show. Sadly, Larry died in 1959 from a brain haemorrhage caused by hypertension. “It’s very tragic,” said Julie. “He had been given a year to live so he at least had some warning,” she added.

While growing up, she had been told stories about her script-writing relative by her grandmother. “I couldn’t believe how much he had done. I had always wanted to write a book and I knew I wanted to write about Larry,” said Julie.

It was while researching, she discovered two long-lost radio scripts in the BBC archives, which had been penned by Larry for Hancock in 1952. They were two episodes for a comedy series, called Vacant Lot, focused on life in the dull faded fictional seaside town of Churdley Bay. Despite actors such as Sellers, Milligan and Carry On’s Kenneth Connor being mooted for roles, they were never recorded. Now they will be performed for the first time at the Funny Things festival in Wolverhampton.

The Lost Hancock’s Vacant Lot will be performed at the Light House Media Centre at 3pm and 7pm on Saturday, November 4. Julie is crowdfunding to help publish her book. Visit unbound.com/books/goons.
Return of traditional crimes ‘piles up pressure on police’

By Peter Madeley

THE West Midlands’ police chief has warned that a rise in ‘traditional crimes’ is piling pressure on the region’s force as he took the battle for increased funding to Westminster.

Chief Constable Dave Thompson said spikes in crimes involving guns and knives as well as burglary were ‘back as a challenge’ having previously declined.

While addressing the cross-party Home Affairs Committee in the House of Commons on the future of policing, he also called for a national debate on the ‘horrifying’ scale of people viewing child abuse images online, insisting that prosecuting offenders was ‘not going to be an answer on its own’.

Mr Thompson, who is the lead for the National Police Chiefs Council for Finance, said there were ‘red lights’ over the ability of West Midlands Police to perform. And he admitted that it’s effectiveness had been ‘curtailed’ over the past year due to the continued impact of funding cuts stretching resources.

“I look at neighbourhood officers and they are frustrated that some of the preventative work they want to do is not happening. I look at the kind of reactive investigation loads, and we are finding prioritising that harder,” he told the MPs.

ASSAULTS ON HEALTH STAFF TOPS 15,000 IN FIVE YEARS

By Peter Madeley

MENTAL health staff in the West Midlands have been subjected to violent attacks by patients more than 15,000 times over the last five years, new figures have revealed.

And the number of assaults to the region’s mental health units has rocketed by 23 per cent since 2012-13 leading to calls for tougher security measures to protect workers.

Figures obtained via a Freedom of Information request showed that over the period there was a total of 25,263 attacks across the region’s four mental health trusts – the Black Country Partnership, Dudley and Walsall Mental Health Partnership, South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Trust, and Birmingham and Solihull Mental Health Foundation Trust – equating to an average of 13 attacks a day.

Of those, 15,631 involved patients attacking staff, and 7,679 were participants’ attacks.

The figures also show that on 54 occasions, staff attacked patients, while there were three incidents where staff attacked other workers.

South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Trust saw the largest number of incidents with 9,729 attacks. Across the region, there were 4,099 attacks reported in 2012-13 and 5,052 in 2016-17 – an increase of 22 per cent.

The data was sourced by the Lib Dems, whose West Midlands economy spokesman Rob Quarmby said: “We should take a zero tolerance approach against anyone who attacks any individual. The safety of staff and patients is the most important thing and we take the issue of hospital security very seriously. Staff should be told to report all violent incidents to the police”.

Public service union Unison revealed that in a survey of more than 1,000 mental health staff, 42 per cent of respondents said they had been victims of violence over the last year.

Sara Gorton, head of health at Unison, said staff shortages meant fewer people were around to deal with rising numbers of patients with complex needs. “This is leading to an increased level of violence and a working environment that makes it more difficult to retain staff,” she said.

The Department of Health said it was “completely unacceptable” for NHS staff to face violence or aggression at work. A DoH spokesman said: “Violence against staff is completely unacceptable. It undermines the work of mental health trusts and the important work they do in supporting patients.”

TOURISM has helped boost a county’s economy by more than £850 million and created 17,000 jobs, figures show.

Tourism has also been rising as visitors continue to flock to Worcestershire and the Wyre Forest district. Councillors are bidding to get an even bigger slice of the tourism pie to help attract more investment.

The most recent statistics show more than 16 million tourist trips are being made to Worcestershire every year. Visitors to the Wyre Forest district, which boasts the Severn Valley Railway and the West Midland Safari Park, also attracted more people.

Councillor Ken Pollock said: “It’s fantastic news. We are a world-class county and the more people who enjoy our beautiful countryside and picturesque towns, the better.”

Tourism booming as business hits £850m

HAYESOWEN CHRONICLE Thursday, November 2, 2017

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Return of traditional crimes ‘piles up pressure on police’

By Peter Madeley

THE West Midlands’ police chief has warned that a rise in ‘traditional crimes’ is piling pressure on the region’s force as he took the battle for increased funding to Westminster.

Chief Constable Dave Thompson said spikes in crimes involving guns and knives as well as burglary were ‘back as a challenge’ having previously declined.

While addressing the cross-party Home Affairs Committee in the
IN the fast paced modern workplace, it can be hard to get a moment to catch your breath. However, new research shows that Brits all over the UK are sacrificing their lunch break to spend a greater proportion of the working week chained to their workspace.

It is nothing new that the true value of a proper lunch break and the positive impact it can have on workers is lost on some employers. However, it seems that under the pressure of a never-ending workload and in the race to get ahead, more and more Brits are choosing to sacriﬁce lunch altogether.

Research unveiled today by leading job board totaljobs, who surveyed 1,230 workers across the UK, has highlighted that over half of Brits (56%) do not take their full lunch break.

While the average lunch break designated to workers is 40 minutes, the average time taken each day by the average UK employee is only 27. Over the course of a career, Brits are losing £33,264 in earnings for the week they do during unpaid lunch breaks, amounting to 1.6 times the average UK annual salary.

The research indicates that many workers turn to proper lunch breaks as a result of their mind-set and the culture that has been created, as opposed to a company policy dictated by senior management.

Though 65% said they were actively encouraged to take a proper lunch break, only 56% of these workers said they did. The remaining 32% found themselves too busy to take a lunch break and often skipped it altogether. However, the research also revealed that 1 in 5 workers were not aware of legislation around lunch breaks. This suggests that many workers do not know they have a right to a lunch break and, employers have a duty to ensure workers are not put under pressure to work through lunch or after hours, but also informed around their lunch break.

IN the fast paced modern workplace, it can be hard to get a moment to catch your craving. Nearly a third (32%) of employees are not only doing work during unpaid lunch breaks, amounting to 68% of all UK workers said that they do.

While employers legally have to designate time for lunch and allocated breaks and many companies are actively encouraging workers to have a lunch break, employees still clearly feel they have not earned their break due to their volume of work. This will naturally cause a knock on effect to the rest of their working day, with 37% of women and 26% of men stating they felt stressed when they have had to skip lunch.

There is also a clear difference in industrial perceptions of a lunch break. While over half (56%) of those in the manufacturing industry were likely to use their lunch break in full, only 31% of those in the banking sector said they did. The remaining 32% found themselves too busy to take a lunch break and often skipped it altogether.

Hapless hero – Greg’s character Dan is down on his luck in Man Down on Channel 4 on Wednesday nights at 10pm

**Greg: I’ll get to grips with adulthood in Man Down**

**Lie to sit back – it’s that thing (where) I don’t have a choice,” Greg, in reference to his back workload. “I’m very lucky that I’ve got these things to do, so I do them and I love them, but even the choice I wouldn’t get off my sofa.

“My equivalent of having a baby,” he concludes, shaking his head. “Awful!”

The teacher-turned stand-up comedian has good reason to remain vertical, however, for this autumn alone he has embarked on a big US tour, You Magnificent Beast; returned to his throne for a fifth series of the brilliant Taskmaster; and is once again starring in his self-penned mini-series, Man Down.

Having enjoyed such success with the Channel 4 hit Man Down, he assures me he feels ‘more relaxed than I ever have’ awaiting the fourth series’ reception.

Normally I’m just absolutely bricking myself, but this time I’m really sure if you like Man Down, you’ll like this,” says Greg, 49. “I could be wrong, but it’s in a similar vein and if anything, we’ve pushed the levels of madness.

“I’m not saying (this one) wasn’t hard work,” he quickly adds. “The writing process is sickening and stressful and I hate it, but I have seen this series back and I’m really pleased with it.”

**Desperate**

Having found its groove, fans can expect another frenetic dose of disaster as child-trapped-in-a-man’s-body Dan (Greg) is blinkered by unrealistic hopes for his impending fatherhood. He’s quit his much-hated job as a teacher and, looking for a fresh start, is on an increasingly desperate hunt to find a new home for his soon-to-be family.

Add aggressive geese, desperate attempts to fit in at Dads’ Club and the pressure of a christening to the mix and, as expected, there’s little that doesn’t conspire to keep this Man Down.

“I think he’s just everyone’s loser, isn’t he?” Greg says. “For me I’ve taken actual weak aspects of my own character and put them in him – only we don’t give him any of the coping strategies.”

Grinning, he follows: “I am of the belief that we’ve all winging it – none of us know how to do life, really. Some of us are pretending we do, but with Dan it’s fun to see someone who is openly winging it and hasn’t given the strategies to even disguise his folly or to learn.

“But I love that he never learns,” he continues. “I love that he is so self-involved; we’ve taken the ugly aspects of human nature and put them in a bloke, but the redeeming thing we give him is he’s relatively loyal and he is a trier,” he reasons. And I think people love a trier. More crucial than the relatable characters, even, is the show’s ability to have its audiences in hysterics.

“The cloud above everything is, ‘Is it funny?’ Is it going to make people laugh?” explains Greg, who is the first to admit he struggles to keep it together on set.

“One of the mild frustrations I feel is when Man Down is described as ‘slapstick’,” he states. “We work hard to surprise people in the show and we don’t want people to guess where something is going to go. I think that’s when we’re at our best, when something happens that no one was expecting.”

It’s the ‘torturous’ writing process worth it, then? “It’s always worth it. It is, I suppose, my equivalent of having a baby,” he suggests, laughing wildly, before quickly adding: “I don’t want to compare it to having a baby. I take that back!”

“But you forget the pain, (and) that’s what people I know who’ve had babies say,” he elaborates.

“As soon as we start filming, I forget the pain.”

“It’s just putting the ideas together,” he muses, confessing he has no system other than sitting together in a room with ‘funny’ co-writers. “You can have ideas and we’ve got characters that we love now and we know how they’re going to react to things, but it’s getting those ideas to sit together that’s the challenge.”

“Birthing” a sitcom, is, however, understandably a far cry from Greg’s teaching days: a stretch that has inspired much of his comedy since he left the profession over a decade ago.

“I’d always wanted to do comedy, so teaching – although I had great times doing it – was always a bit of an avoidance strategy, if I’m honest,” confesses the star, who famously played psychotic head of sixth form Mr Gilbert in The Inbetweeners.

“I got to the stage where I was so miserable, that it wasn’t fair for me to carry on,” he confesses. “So (giving comedy a go) was necessity – but it is often with me. I’m often driven by necessity, rather than actually doing things like an adult.”

“I’m very like Dan in that regard – in that it takes me to be forced into a corner, before I do something. And I felt I had no choice but to try comedy.” A refreshing example of a talent who is as funny off stage as on, Greg – who was born in Wales but grew up in Shropshire – made a clever move.

Aside from an impressive roster of TV gigs (including anything from panel shows such as Mock The Week and Never Mind The Buzzcocks to his Buta-nominated performance in BBC Three’s Cuckoo), the hit Sitcom is capping out stand-up shows country-wide.

He’s currently on the road for the aforementioned You Magnificent Beast – and he couldn’t be happier.

“I love it and I don’t understand why I ever hear a comedian complain about it,” Greg says of touring: “It’s a mystery to me. It’s wonderful.

“It appeals to my personality, stand-up, because it’s instant gratification.”
SPEEDING DRIVER IN ROAD BAN WALKS FREE

Valorising a devoted evening in the Cineworld in Broad Street.

**A SHOPKEEPER who was charged with speeding in his Mercedes despite being banned from the road has been cleared by top judges.**

Aghaji Ali was locked up for seven months on Wolverhampton Crown Court.

The 60-year-old admitted fraud and failing to tell the court he had been convicted of speeding in September 2010 after he admitted driving during his disqualification. He did not respond and, when a re-ordered hearing was refused, he did not make an appearance.

The police and DVLA became suspicious and Ali admitted in police interview that he had been driving the Mercedes on both occasions. He gave the false information because he knew he had been revoked and ‘punicked’.

The judge who jailed Ali said he was ‘aware that, had he provided accurate information to the police, it would have been discovered he was banned from driving’.

He was, however, of previous good character and had a ‘high-standing in the community’.

Mr Justice Green ruled: ‘There were strong reasons for considering that immediate custody was not necessary and a suspended sentence would suffice. The judge failed sufficiently to address alternatives to immediate custody.

‘The appeal is therefore allowed.’

The case is being handled with Lord Justice Simon and Judge Mark Brown.

He concluded: ‘A sentence of six months community order is suspended for 12 months, is imposed.’

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Simple steps homeowners can take now to protect their assets

Head of April King Legal Paul King explains why some homeowners are doing too little, too late to protect their hard-earned assets.

1. Care Cost Fees
A lot of people are still unaware that if they need care in later life, their assets will be means-tested by the local authority to help pay for these services. This goes back to the Community Care Act 1990, which came into force in 1993.

If someone requires social care in later life, the local authority will look to use the assets of a person until they get down to a lower limit of £14,250, when the local authority will take over the fees.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. “My own grandmother sadly passed away recently at the age of 92. My grandfather had died many years earlier and left everything to her. When she needed care in the last six years of her life, because my grandfather had left everything to her, the house and all the estate were counted in the local authority’s means test.

Our clients tell us, ‘We’ve worked hard all our lives, why should the local authority get it all?’”

Just as she died, she had gone down to that lower limit of £14,250 – and that’s all that her children inherited.”

There are many myths about the steps people can take to protect their assets from being used like this. The main one is that a parent should simply sign their house over to the children now, so it won’t be taken into consideration for means testing. That’s just not true.

Local authorities will actually look to see if you’ve ‘deliberately deprived’ yourself of an asset by giving property away, going back over any period in time.

Sometimes people think if the gift is made seven years prior then the house is safe.

2. Bloodline Trust Wills
The majority of April King’s clients have already made standard “mirror wills” with other firms before approaching the firm. A mirror will is when a couple leave everything to each other on the first death, then to the children when the second partner dies.

But modern family life means these type of wills leave a lot to chance.

Explains Paul: “If I have a mirror will leaving everything to my wife and she remarries or goes into care after my death then either the new husband or the local authority are likely to inherit most. If not all, of my estate ahead of my children.

Even if my children are named in my mirror will it is by no means certain that they will inherit anything.

Once again, this is because a remarriage would cancel the will my wife had previously made with me and make the new husband next-of kin. This often comes as a big shock to modern couples who had perhaps thought that all was in order and that the family bloodline would one day inherit.

The same is true for thinking that their children and/or grandchildren will one day benefit under a mirror will. If any of your children should die leaving everything to their husband or wife and that son-in-law or daughter-in-law should then remarry, then your grandchildren would be the ones to lose out under the line of inheritance.

Worse still, someone else’s grandchildren would be in line to receive the benefit of all your years of hard work!

It’s another important reason for home-owning couples to upgrade to a Property Trust Will.

Paul goes on to explain a further important point. Most clients he sees are surprised to learn that remarriage usually cancels a will and makes the new spouse next in line to inherit, ahead of their own children!

Protecting your half of the house in this way, he suggests, ensures that your children ultimately inherit when the survivor dies.

“Had my grandmother remarried after the death of my grandfather the whole estate could have passed sideways out of the family,” says Paul.

3. Lasting Power of Attorney
Paul explains how people often get confused thinking that, because they have made a will, their executors can also deal with assets if there is illness, stroke or some other form of incapacity while they are still alive.

“Everyone should actually have two documents – a will that deals with their estate on death, and a lasting power of attorney that deals with their estate during their lifetime,” he says.

The lasting power of attorney is a relatively new introduction and is divided into two parts – one deals with finance, the other deals with health and welfare. In many ways it’s similar to a passport; a document that’s registered now and one which can be physically handed to the attorneys should the need arise. It allows the attorneys, perhaps the children, to deal with banks and pension companies etc should their parent become incapacitated, but also to deal with matters such as where the parent should be living and how they receive care. Your attorneys, again perhaps your children, must legally act in your best interests at all times. You can choose a number of attorneys to act, either jointly or independently, and April King advises on the various options available.

Paul continues: “These things can be avoided by having a bloodline trusts will. Under these types of wills your children have complete control and access to the inheritance they receive from you but give added protection from the twists and turns of modern family life. The wording in these wills states that any money left over on their demise must pass to any children born of them – your grandchildren.”

Couples are often surprised to discover that even joint bank accounts can be frozen until the bank sees sight of a lasting power of attorney document.

Having a lasting power of attorney removes the burden on children should ill-health happen further down the line. It helps a family deal with bank accounts and so on during a parent’s lifetime and ceases on death. Crucially, you have to complete a lasting power of attorney while they are still in good mental health.

If someone becomes ill through say, a stroke or dementia, this option is lost and the family would have to apply for a order from the Court of Protection – a drawn out and expensive process. It is therefore a good idea for clients to plan ahead and remove any future burden from the family.

Once again, all adults should be thinking of this, particularly where there are children or a business involved. It’s not just something to think about when you get older, that’s the challenge for us.

People think ‘I’m not ill, why do I need to make a power of attorney?’?

But they’re missing the point. This is a document that has to be done in advance. Paul adds: “The next part is to appoint the attorneys, your children. Don’t forget, your children can be the executors of your will and attorneys as well. The lasting power of attorney remains in place until you die unless you want to cancel it. Once it’s registered, you don’t have to worry if you then develop some debilitating illness. A burden has been removed from the family at an already difficult time.”

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**April King**

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Your local office is: King Charles House, Castle Hill, Dudley, DY1 4PS
Are you in Year 9 or Year 11 and interested in a career in health?

Open Evening

Tuesday 7 November 2017, 5:30pm - 7:30pm

Offering an exciting and dynamic education to young people aged 14 - 19. Combining traditional academic qualifications such as GCSEs and A-levels with technical and practical learning experiences, Health Futures UTC teaches the healthcare professionals of tomorrow, today.

Find out more about joining us in Year 10 or Year 12, in September 2018.

We are now accepting applications from young people living in Birmingham, Sandwell, Wolverhampton, Dudley, Walsall, Solihull and North Worcestershire who would like to join us as Year 10 or Year 12 students in September 2018.

The first UTC in the UK with healthcare and health sciences as its specialism, Health Futures prepares students for a wide range of health related careers that span the NHS, Public Health, public sector agencies, private industry, voluntary and charitable institutes, and community organisations – locally, nationally and across the globe.

The open evening takes place on Tuesday November 7, from 5.30pm - 7pm.

Find the right career path with Health Futures UTC
Helping to put you on path to success

Thinking about the future and seeing yourself in the career of your choice can seem like a distant dream while you are still concentrating on your GCSEs but visiting Halesowen College and talking to friendly and informative staff can turn your dream into a reality.

Go along to the open events on Friday, November 3, between 4pm and 8pm and Saturday, November 4, between 10am and 4pm to discover how the college can help you take your own personal route to success.

By making Halesowen College your number one choice, you will be able to choose from the region’s biggest range of courses, at all levels and an ability to combine subjects will help you to tailor a programme that best suits you. Whether you have your sights on university, a vocational qualification or an apprenticeship, the highly professional staff will be available to give you advice and guidance and help at every stage of the decision-making process.

Achievement levels for Halesowen College students are excellent. This year, 98 per cent of students achieved an A-level pass and 31 per cent attained high grades A*, A or B – 32 subjects achieved an outstanding 100 per cent pass rate! Vocational results were equally impressive, with 222 students gaining Triple Distinction Star grades in their Level 3 Extended Diplomas. As a result over 750 Halesowen students have progressed to university this autumn.

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Apprenticeships are also growing in popularity and Halesowen College offers an exciting range of opportunities for you to get the qualifications that employers are looking for, while earning a wage. Apprentices are highly likely to secure permanent employment at the end of their programme – 93.7 per cent of Halesowen apprentices who completed their apprenticeship in 2016/17 progressed to full-time employment.

Visitors to the college’s open events will also have the opportunity to see for themselves the fantastic facilities students enjoy in a modern and easily accessible campus. All curriculum areas have benefitted in the last few years from an extensive development programme and whether your interests are academic, scientific, technological or creative, Halesowen College is one of the best equipped colleges to help you succeed.

A college spokesman said: “Our students are at the heart of everything we do and we want to support them throughout their Halesowen experience. “Students can access support from their personal coach and learning support staff. “Financial assistance is also available and nine out of 10 of our current students travel to Halesowen on our free college buses.

“Make Halesowen College your number one choice. Come to our Open Events, meet staff and students and see yourself as having the successful future you deserve.”
The Chronicle offers an unrivalled platform to reach local customers. To find out how our advertising sales team can help your business call 01902 313131.

With over 440,000 potential customers every week, you can be sure to reach your target audience at anytime.

The great escape of a fugitive king

WE don't think of the English as particularly rebellious or revolutionary but we killed our king and declared a republic long before the French.

It's just that we changed our minds after a decade of po-faced Puritans and dictator Oliver Cromwell.

King Charles I lost his head in 1649 and his eldest son would have followed him to the block two years later if it wasn't for some brave and resourceful West Midlands folk. Historian and aristocrat Charles Spencer (the Earl, brother of Princess Diana) looks at the young Charles II's desperate escape after the bloody battle of Worcester finally ended the Civil Wars in Parliament's favour.

Catholic

This saw the king and small band of supporters moving across our region, depending on local Catholic families to hide him from the Roundhead search parties.

This included the famous day spent hiding in an oak tree at Boscobel House (hence all those pubs called the Royal Oak) and crammed into a hiding hole at Moseley Old Hall, near Wolverhampton.

In what was becoming the Black Country, with the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, Charles Stuart and his Royalist officers face a night time ride through Stourbridge, where Roundhead troops are based, speaking French so the locals think them immigrant Huguenot glassmakers, as the French Protestant craftsmen are common in the town.

The future 'Merry Monarch' also has banter with a Rowley Regis blacksmith who tells the disguised monarch what a rogue the king is. Luckily for him the king sees the funny side.

Spencer's book zips along with the speed of a thriller as it reveals a fascinating episode of British history which largely took place on our doorsteps.

Kinver, Pattingham, Madeley and Newport also get a mention, as does Wolverhampton where the king's sympathisers learn about Parliament's search for the king. They placed a bounty of £1,000 on his head, in those days a fortune, the equivalent to a lifetime's wages.

Charles emerges as a complex character, a highly self-entitled young man and a womaniser, sometimes self-pitying and sometimes heroic with a sense of humour and apparently a good mimic of the Midlands accent. The real heroes are the Whitgreave, Giffard and Pendere families, and other Catholics, who risked their lives to save the king, paving the way for his return to the throne a decade later.

To Catch A King by Charles Spencer is published in hardback by William Collins, £20.

LEON BURAKOWSKI

An old picture of Boscobel House, now managed by English Heritage

The young Charles Stuart, later restored as Charles II

A vintage picture of Moseley Old Hall, now managed by the National Trust

The new book by Charles Spencer about the king's escape

The tree at Boscobel said to be where the king hid

Roundheads put a bounty on the king's head

The young Charles Stuart, later restored as Charles II

Source: JICREG 31.10.2016

Halesowen Chronicle
Thursday, November 2, 2017
A ONE-OFF unique charity show starring Rick Wakeman and led by a Black Country production company has been called off.

The ambitious Over the Moon show, arranged by Stourbridge-based Base Video Productions, has been postponed after hitting unforeseen technical and practical problems.

Keyboards supreme Wakeman, who was at Wolverhampton Grand Theatre this week, and international artist Maria Rud were leading the Over the Moon show.

A-list stars Ricky Gervais, Joanna Lumley and Peter Egan all took part in a video urging people to support the show which was taking place at the spectacular Queen’s House in Greenwich, London, on December 10, in aid of the charity Animals Asia.

Comeback campaign

But it was announced this week that though the difficulties could all be overcome, this was not possible in the current timescale.

A statement says: “So the decision was made to actively look for a new date in 2018 in order to ensure this very special and unique event achieves everything it should.

“Potential dates in 2018 are already being considered and as soon as a firm date is set then further announcements will be made.”

The show was organised in aid of wildlife charity Animals Asia, which campaigns to end the bear bile trade.

Keyboards supremo Wakeman, who was son Adam, percussionist Ed Scull and leading London vocal ensemble was made to actively look for a new date in 2018 in order to ensure this very special and unique event achieves everything it should.

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Asiatic black bears are caged on bile farms in China, according to Animals Asia figures.

Animals Asia has rescued over 600 bears, caring for them at its hospitals in China and Vietnam. The ‘moon bears’ are kept on farms where they are locked up in cages for years with bile extracted from their gallbladder daily.

The bile is used for medical reasons such as the treatment of rheumatism.

Tickets were sold at £32 for standard or £84 VIP. Anyone who has bought tickets will be contacted for a refund or reallocation to the rearranged show.
Activity in pole position to become Olympic sport

Scruffy shoes a sign of throwaway society

IT’S definitely getting colder and rather wintry so this week I thought we’d take a look at how you can warm up your homes with a little vintage light and colour!

Candles are the obvious choice when it comes to creating a cozy atmosphere so look out for candlesticks and tea-light holders.

You can pick up some lovely silver candlesticks for very reasonable prices in the saleroom, also those size little round china, enamel and pottery candleholders with handles.

Tea-lights can be housed in a variety of holders and look really good in old china tea-cups and on small vintage plates.

Strategically placed lamps can also add some much-needed light and colour, especially the Tiffany ones with the beautifully decorated shades.

Think about warm colours and how you can add small vintage pieces that might bring some extra cheer to a particular room.

Brightly-coloured china and pottery jugs are ideal for a dining room and why not fill vases with dried flowers for hallways and sitting rooms?

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Demand is declining for shoe repairs

Mood

Prints, posters and paintings can change really alter the mood of any room and again can be bought on a limited budget at auctions.

Look out for colourful vintage rugs, cushions and tablecloths and also for copper items for a kitchen – copper and brass pieces always look cheerful on an autumn day.

Coloured glass bottles grouped together on a window sill look great, as do collections of vintage wine glasses on display, and look for china trios with floral designs to remind you that spring WILL come around again!

As with all vintage items, check for signs of wear and tear before you buy and stick to your budget when buying at auction – remember that Christmas is just around the corner!

• Perry and Phillips hold valuation days for sale items only, every Wednesday from 10am until 4pm.
• The next Perry and Phillips sale of antiques and collectables takes place at the Mill Street saleroom in Low Town, Bridgnorth, on Tuesday, December 5 – our Christmas auction. Viewing will be during the weekend and on Monday and also from 10am on auction day. New sale bidders are advised to attend the saleroom early on auction day to register and be allocated a bidding number.
• Perry and Phillips hold a valuing day on the first Tuesday of every other month.

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IF you still think pole dancing is all about seedy clubs – and even seedy clientele – then you’ve got some catching up to do.

Firstly, it’s become in popularity as a workout method in recent years (and a blemish harder to shake – that’s seriously, have you seen the muscles on these poles?). Secondly, it’s now looking like it might become an Olympic sport.

This week, the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GASF), confirmed its given observer status to the International Pole Sports Federation (IPSF), which hopefully means a clearer pathway towards full Olympic recognition eventually.

It’s exciting – and well-deserved – news for thousands of pole fans, who know exactly how brilliant and beneficial it can be for their body and psychologically.

Pole aficionados Sarah-Jayne Bell and Tara Murphys tell us what’s so great about it...

IT’S A FULL-BODY WORKOUT

Sarah-Jayne, who runs STUDIOS, home of Princess Pole Dancing, explains that pole helps improve both strength and cardio. “The main physical benefits include core work, cardio, muscle strength and conditioning and increased flexibility and endurance. The moves incorporated really

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IT boost flexibility and balance

Pole dancing offers a full body workout – now it could become an Olympic sport

In her pole fitness studio, Taryn Moore, of Ironbridge, instructs Victoria Hedges and Leila Martin

It boosts flexibility and balance

IPSF (International Pole Sports Federation) has announced that pole dancing may become an Olympic sport. The decision was made following a recommendation by the Global Association of International Sports Federations (GASF), which has confirmed its observer status to the IPSF.

The IPSF was established in 2013 and has since grown to become one of the largest international pole sports organizations, with over 200 member clubs around the world.

The decision to consider pole dancing as a potential Olympic sport is significant as it will provide a platform for athletes to compete at the highest level and showcase the skill and athleticism required to excel in the sport.

Pole dancing is a full-body workout that combines dance, acrobatics, and strength training. Athletes perform on a rotating pole, using their upper and lower body to maintain balance and execute a variety of intricate moves.

The moves involve a combination of spinning, flipping, and balancing, requiring strength, coordination, and a great deal of physical and mental fortitude.

Pole dancing has gained popularity in recent years as a form of exercise and entertainment, with competitions and festivals held around the world.

The IPSF has played a significant role in promoting the sport, organizing competitions and providing training and education for athletes and coaches.

Sarah-Jayne Bell, a pole dancer who has represented the United Kingdom at international competitions, said the decision to consider pole dancing as an Olympic sport is a “huge step forward” for the sport.

“I am extremely proud to have represent the UK at the international level,” she said. “This is a huge achievement for our sport and we are all working hard to ensure that we are ready to compete at the highest level.”

The IPSF is committed to supporting athletes and promoting the sport, and is working closely with the International Olympic Committee (IOC) to ensure that pole dancing is considered as a potential Olympic sport.

If selected, athletes will be given the opportunity to compete on the Olympic stage, with potentially millions of people watching their performances.

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**Severn Trent hit by £700k fraud over housing sales**

FIVE men defrauded Severn Trent Water out of around £700,000 by fraudulently selling properties owned by the company, a court heard.

A jury sitting at Birmingham Crown Court was told how 50-year-old Edwina Barker joined Severn Trent in June 2009 and was employed to manage their housing stock portfolio.

Barker identified a total of 21 houses to sell in the Midlands – including ones in Stourbridge, Oldbury, Wolverhampton and Birmingham. Barker, of Wake Green Park, Moseley, Birmingham, undervalued these properties through fake valuations and failed to advertise the sale to the public.

The houses were instead sold to his friends and associates at an artificially low price and then sold at full price.

**Complaint**

Following a complaint made by a member of the public to the utility company relating to the lack of marketing, Severn Trent conducted an internal investigation.

Barker, Manoj Chohan, Terry Croft, of Cheltenham, and Dinesh Chadusama, of Sparkhill, Birmingham, denied the charges but were all found guilty of conspiracy to commit fraud by false representation.

A judge sentenced Barker to three years in jail, 48-year-old Chohan, of Birmingham, to 21 months suspended for two years, 50-year-old Croft, to a 12-month community order with 120 hours of unpaid work and 51-year-old Chadusama to a two year term which was suspended for two years.

**He’s been known as a political bruiser but now UKIP politician Bill Etheridge is really ready to trade blows in a charity boxing scrap.**

**Slow progress to venue plan**

THE restoration of Dudley Hippodrome could be under threat after a council leader said he believed ‘not much progress’ had been made by campaigners trying to save the landmark former theatre.

Patrick Harley admitted the authority had started to think about other uses for the building on Castle Hill in the event of the rescue not being a success.

The council leader said the Black Country Hippodrome group had been given a ‘generous amount of time to get their act together to make a viable business case for retaining the Hippodrome’.

A report is due to go to cabinet on the next step in the saga. A previous council plan had been to demolish the building to create a public open space.

Campaigners have requested a 20-year extension to its current five-year lease which they say is too short to attract investment.

Councillor Harley insisted they would continue to have the council’s support ‘if they could meet their milestones’ but suggested time could be running out.

Control of Dudley Council switched from Labour to the Conservatives in May but Councillor Harley denied he and senior colleagues were lukewarm about the restoration of the building.

**Wrestling night to help charity**

A PROFESSIONAL wrestling show will raise funds for a children’s epilepsy charity on November 10 at 6.30pm at the British Legion in Ruiton.

The event from 6.30pm on Saturday, November 11, is at the Blenton Imperial Banqueting Suite against an, as yet, unnamed opponent.
**Homes & Gardens**

**Get a taste of the great outdoors on these walks**

**BLOW away the cobwebs and take in the wealth of autumn walks where you can appreciate flora and fauna in dazzling shades of burnt orange, warm yellows and deep burgundies.**

Here are some of the country’s best:

- **KILLERTON, DEVON**
  - Admire the pallet of colours offered in this garden, including the deep orange berries of the Chinese scarlet rose, the red berries and furry leaves of the Cotoneaster lacteus, and the Zelkova carpinifolia turning a deep, buttery yellow.

- **CRARA E GARDEN, ARGYLL**
  - A spectacular 36-acre woodland garden in a dramatic setting. Crarae has a wonderful collection of woody plants centred on the Crarae Burn, which is spanned by several bridges and tumbles through a rocky gorge in a series of cascades. The lush, naturalistic planting and rushing water gives the feel of a Himalayan valley.

- **FELBRIGG, NORFOLK**
  - The Great Wound in the Felbrigg estate is full of interesting fungi in the autumn. After inspecting these, look up to see the bright copper leaves of the Victory beech. It’s worth taking a detour (at point 6 on the route) down Lion’s Mouth in autumn. The route feels like you are walking into the jaws of a lion with the tunnel of colour provided from the trees.

- **FOUNTAINS ABBEY AND STUDLEY ROYAL, NORTH YORKSHIRE**
  - The sweeping landscape of Fountains Abbey and Studley Royal is full of autumn colour at this time of year. One of the rangers has designed a deer park walk through the estate which gives you the chance to see the deer rut as well as the beautiful autumn colours.

- **GROSELYN AND WEAR**
  - Buzzing with wildlife, Gibside is home to red kites, roe deer and many other rare animals. During the autumn months, you can see the colours changing on the trees below as you rise out of the Derwent Valley on this circular skyline walk offering plenty of opportunities for panoramic views.

- **MOUNT STEWART, COUNTY DOWN**
  - Voted one of the top 10 gardens in the world, Mount Stewart reflects a rich tapestry of design and planting artistry bearing the hallmark of its creator - Edith, Lady Londonderry. There are walks for everyone, from a short stroll around the gardens to longer walks around the lake and woodlands. The lake is particularly beautiful in autumn with gorgeous red and gold foliage. The banks are lined with primulas, azaleas and large-leaved gunneras.

- **DINAS ISLAND, PEMBROKESHIRE (top)**
  - This circular walk on Dinas Island boasts some of the finest views anywhere on the Pembrokeshire coast.
  - In early autumn, the coastal slopes are cloaked with the yellows and browns of fading bracken, while on the headland, the pinks and purples of common heather are just coming in to bloom, alongside the yellow gorse flowers.

- **DUNSTER, SOMERSET (above left)**
  - A walk to the keep of the castle rewards visitors with a 360-degree view taking in Dunkery Beacon (the highest point on Exmoor) and the Bratsh Canal. The south terrace offers views across the former deer park which will be full of colour as the roe crops up to see the red deer. The area has a Mediterranean feel due to its microclimate which enables tender plants to thrive, including a row of Chusan palm.

- **WINKHAYNE ARBORETUM, SURREY**
  - During the autumn months, the splendour of Wink- hayne Arboeum comes to life with rich, blazing colour from the Japanese, American and Norwegian maples. The 2.5-mile walk to Oakhurst weaves its way through the woodland to the lodge, from where you can enjoy spectacular views across the landscape.

**Gardens that bring life to the concrete jungle**

Julia Bradbury (centre) and Ben Coles (right) back community gardens

Hannah Stephenson

Report by Hannah Stephenson

AS charities such as the RHS and Groundwork continue their work to green grey Britain, creating green spaces within urban sprawls, community gardens are becoming more important than ever.

Over the next 12 months, organic drinks brand Honest and environmenta l regeneration charity Groundwork.org.uk will be working together to bring more green spaces and gardens to busy urban areas. Groundwork community gardener Sean Gifford helps local groups set up community gardens in a range of areas from housing estates to disused parking lots.

"We meet with community groups and take them through the process, from design to plant selection,” he says.

"Our mission is about greening grey spaces, often areas with a lot of concrete, with high levels of social isolation and often crime,” says Sean.

"Usually in urban city spaces there’s not much biodiversity. Green spaces help people relax and feel healthier.

Ben Coles, Groundwork director of communities and environmental services, offers the following tips.

- Find out how many people are interested in it – the more momentum from locals who are keen to do it, the more voices you have to be heard.
- Organise a meeting with neighbours to see how it could be taken forward.
- You are always going to have one or two champions among groups who are excited about growing food and setting up gardens near their houses,” says Coles.

"It’s those champions who need to get a few other people on board and find a spot. Land is key.”

**CHECK SPACE AVAILABILITY**

"Find a spot you think would be suitable. It might be at the edge of a park, or a small wooded area or simply an open disused space. Speak to your local authority partner or landowners or whoever is responsible for the land. Contact your housing department, landlord or housing association.

**BUILDING MOMENTUM**

"Sometimes the councils will refer you to an organisation that can help, other times the residents will find their own sponsor-ship.

"This might come through local businesses, a charity, or with guidance through organisations such as the Federation of Community Farms & City Gardens (www.farmgarden.org.uk).

"Grants are given by charities, lottery funding and corporate sponsors, although communities also try to raise money by or- ganising local fund-raising events and there is some crowd funding too.

**MOVING FORWARD**

"We would look at the needs, from designing and constructing a growing space to providing people like Sean to help the groups get up and running, and to recogn-ise that some of them don’t know a lot about what they can grow and how they would look after it. It’s always a tailored response,” says Coles.

"Our approach would be to get them to the point where they are happy and confident enough to look after the spaces them- selves. It’s recognising how much support they are going to need. Are they good gar- deners who might just need a refresh? Or are they complete beginners?"

**IT MAY NOT BE EASY**

Ken Elkes, spokesman for the Federation of Community Farms and City Gardens, says: "The bottom line is that most groups run on a shoestring and find it difficult to get enough income to sustain and expand their community gardens. "There’s a lot less funding around than there used to be because local councils have cut back on the money and because of the popularity of community gardens there’s more competi-tion for the funding that is available.

"But there are ways of starting up and sustaining a community garden. Most don’t need a huge amount of money. Most people start out as a group who come together and do everything on a voluntary basis. We can give advice on funding opportunities and have access to information and resources, acting as a conduit between the members and corporate sponsors.”

**Check your energy bills – there may be a mistake**

Householders are advised to check their bills carefully as a recent survey has shown that billing mistakes by energy companies have cost customers on average £79 each.

 Midlands energy expert Ben Fox said switch- ing website uSwitch.com believed these errors had put 1.5 million residents outside of pocket by more than £102 million and it had taken some of them an average of 35 days to recover their money.

"With Christmas round the corner autumn is when many people review their finances and that should include their energy bills," said Mr Fox, of Noreus Ltd at Keele, Staffordshire.

"Households are already feeling the pinch from recent price rises, and having to chase for an average of five weeks to get their money back simply adds insult to injury," he added.

Almost one in three of those affected by the billing blunders, or 28 per cent, said they were changed off meter readings that did not match their meter readings they had supplied. A quarter, or 26 per cent, said their bill did not add up correctly. Other billing blunders included suppliers getting direct debit amounts wrong (eight per cent), applying incorrect bills (seven per cent) and mixing up one bill with someone else’s (five per cent).

However, uSwitch.com said the billing errors could be higher, since more than a quarter of consumers (27 per cent) admitted not reading their energy bills at all because they were too com-plicated.

But the energy trade body Ofgem has hit back at the review and said it had managed to reduce their overall number of complaints by two million.

A spokesman said: “We have taken strong ac- tion to address billing failures by suppliers, with suppliers paying almost £40m to fix the problems. Mr Fox supported uSwitch.com who are call- ing for market regulator Ofgem and suppliers to dramatically reduce billing errors, reimburse customers when appropriate, and issue bills that are easier to understand.

**Energy companies may be charging you incorrectly**
Goodyear history caught by camera

THEY depict another era, when production at the iconic Wolverhampton Goodyear factory was underway but drawing to a halt.

These impressive images have been released by former worker Mike Pearce who began taking them whilst he was working as a key operator for the firm.

Mike, aged 57, of Heath Hayes, who was based at the Bushbury Lane site for 28 years when he worked for Goodyear, left the plant at the end of October last year. Reflecting on his time there, the married father-of-two still feels that the images of Goodyear have some poignancy.

He said: “I think it was about 10 years before bosses announced that the plant would close that we all got a sense of foreboding, knowing that the job wouldn’t last forever.

“So I started taking the photos of the site and looking at ways of making the plant immortalised in pictures.

“When they closed the tyre-making facility, I think that was really the point that it started to hit home to people and we had our own ways of documenting our time there.

“Spending 28 years working for the same company, you do develop strong relationships with the people you work with, and that’s what I wanted to show in the photos – the strength of the factory and its importance in the city.”

Mike took the photos and enhanced them in Photoshop to bring out certain colours, highlights and shadows.

He said: “I learned that professional photographers these days still enhance their photos like the old photographers used to do in the dark room.

“Back then, the technique was called ‘dodge and burn’ where the luminosity of a photo could be only manipulated by the length of the exposure.

“Now, there’s a tool for that in Photoshop which makes it a lot easier, but the principle is the same. I think my Goodyear work is a lot more garish than the work I’ve done since. My newer work is more subtle, but the Goodyear photos are still special to me.”

Now, Mike, who has previously triumphed in several competitions, has developed his hobby of photography into a well-respected career.

The former secretary of Cannock Chase photographic society who has just re-started his membership after a three-year break, works for Webbs estate agents based in Cannock. He has used his skills to help sell an extra 35 houses a month.
Padded Fleece Lined Shirts

Only £24.99 plus £4.95 P&P

This superbly warm fleece lined shirt can be worn casually or as a durable outdoor work shirt. Features include a front zip fastening, two button down chest pockets and two hand warming pockets. 100 per cent polyester. Machine washable.

Sizes: S (38”-40”), M (40”-42”), L (42”-44”), XL (44”-46”), XXL (46”-48”), XXXL (48”-50”).

C200BK Black
C200NY Navy
C200RD Red

Lined Chinos

Only £24.99 plus £4.95 P&P

Buy two for £40

With classic chino styling, soft fleece lining, two slant pockets, belt loops and two back button pockets, these traditional favourites provide the perfect solution for the cooler seasons. An additional hidden expanding waist offers an extra two inches of give, enabling you to move and stretch with ease.

Sizes: Leg 27” 29” 31” 33”, Waist 32” 34” 36” 38” 40” 42” 44” 46” 48”.

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Men’s socks fit sizes 6-11 and are available in pack option C418 containing two black, two navy, two maize, two brown, two red and two mid-grey.

C215 Ladies’
C418 Men’s
Offering a warm welcome

Managers Paul and Carol always ensure a warm welcome to customers both old and new at Blackheath’s Shoulder of Mutton pub.

For all the sports fans they boast three large TV screens featuring all sports on Sky, BT and all BOX OFFICE Events not to mention AT THE RACES.

For those who like ‘doing’ rather than ‘watching’, there is the availability of the pool table and dart board.

Loyalty

The pub itself boasts a wide range of ciders, lagers, wines and spirits including four ‘Real Ales’ which they rotate weekly. Regulars very often enjoy ales such as Bathams, AJ Ales, Oakham, JHB, Stairway To Heaven and MA Pardoes Entire, plus many more!

The pub also run a loyalty scheme which means customers can get 10p back on their card for every pound they spend.

A pub spokesman added: “With a juke box and free WIFI to compliment the regular entertainment every Friday, customers cannot ask for much more from a local pub!”
Pam: My show’s not just for old folk

Pam Ayres has been a writer, broadcaster, and entertainer for more than 40 years. She is one of the few authors who has had books in the Sunday Times bestseller charts in almost every decade since the 1970s. She is the author of several best-selling poetry collections, including The Works, With These Hands, Surgically Enhanced and You Made Me Late Again!

And many of her poems are in school textbooks around the world including the UK, USA, China, Australia, New Zealand, Holland, South Africa, Ireland and Singapore. In 2016, once again, the most borrowed poetry book in UK libraries was Pam’s most recent book, You Made Me Late Again. And this year she’s back on the road with a new tour that reaches Wolverhampton’s Grand Theatre on Saturday.

Pam is one of the most popular female comedians performing in UK theatres. Her autobiography, The Necessary Attitude, was the UK’s bestselling female autobiography of 2011, and her 2013 book of poetry, You Made Me Late Again, went straight into the Sunday Times bestseller lists.

ROYAL

She has appeared three times for HM The Queen – at the Silver Jubilee Royal Variety Performance in 1977, at a Royal Gala Charity Reception at St James Palace in 1996, when Pam, as the only entertainer, performed part of her solo stage show, and finally at Sandringham Women’s Institute in 2004, when the Queen attended in her capacity as President of the Sandringham WI.

Subsequently, she was honoured to be awarded the MBE in Queen’s Birthday Honours of 2004. She is presently performing in more than 30 theatre and festival shows and is delighted to be back.

“I hope it will be fun. I’m on stage for two hours and I’ll be using poems and stories and anecdotes and jokes. You have to vary it as much as you possibly can. I’ll use old and new poems – things like I Wish I’d Looked After Myself.

“Youth and germs go hand in hand. I did a tour in which I had a good writing period last winter.”

“Ther e’s no surefire way to write a brilliant new poem. Pam has to wait until the muse strikes and surfs those creative ways.

“The process is waiting and praying for a good idea. That’s the crux of it. It’s to get a good idea that will strike a chord with lots of other people. Those things aren’t that easy to find.

“I’ve been writing about long distance flying recently, that’s come together quite well. It’s looking for a good idea, then I work on it in the mornings. I go in each morning and work on the ideas I’ve got. I try to approach the subject from all sorts of different angles.

“A lot of my time is spent groping for good ideas. When I write you give yourself a mental therapy and that’s good for you. You have to find something people will identify with.”

“Pam is the recently-released autobiography. Her older poetry and social media has allowed her to connect with a new generation. She is on Twitter and is constantly surprised about the new young people who come along.

“I do little political tweets and a bit of sniping from the sidelines, that’s brought in quite an interesting new audience.

“It’s not a show aimed at the old. I get three generations.”

She is proud that performance poetry is now mainstream and feels as sense of kinship with new stars.

“I look now at the number of performance poets that there are and I do feel that it’s partly down to me. Because I don’t know of anybody except Cyril Fletcher, who was doing his odd odes, sitting in an armchair and doing a bit of verse, who opened up the doors to it.

FLATTERING

“There was no one going around with funny poems, using them as the main thrust of the evening. Phill Jupitus said to me ‘you are the reason I’m a performance poet’, I didn’t set out to be a performance poet. I wrote those things and I’d never been musical I’d have made them into funny songs. But I couldn’t do that and everybody fell about laughing when I spoke them and that was good enough. I do feel a lot of people came after me, which is flattering.”

Touring is bliss and she finds herself playing in Gibraltar, Althorp and Dubai, among other places. “You finish in all these amazing spots that you’d never in 100 years go to unless you did it for a living.

“I’m going to play because the roads are busier but I love talking to an audience is great. I’m not as scared as I was at the beginning. If you are successful on a talent show these days you are thrown to enormous audiences before you’re ready. Well, I’m not new but I still love it.”

For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.

Pam: My show’s not just for old folk

A way with words – Pam’s tour reaches the Grand on Saturday

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£12.95pp Sunday/Thursday
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Soap stars head cast in classic spine-chiller

Former EastEnders stars Paul Bradley and Jessie Wallace head the cast in Ira Levin’s classic thriller Deathtrap at the New Alexandra Theatre, Birmingham, next week.

Directed by Adam Penford, it runs rom November 7 to 11.

BAFTA nominated actress Wallace, and Bradley, who is also well-known as Elliott Hope in Holby City, a role he played for 10 years, will be joined by Sam Phillips, Charlie Stemp and Julian Baran.

One of the most successful plays in its genre, Deathtrap centres on Sidney Bruhl (Bradley), a once successful writer of stage thrillers, who is in the grip of chronic writer’s block.

Out of the blue, young playwright Clifford Anderson (Phillips) sends Bruhl one of the only two copies of his brilliant new whodunnit, Deathtrap. Desperate to set Broadway alight once more, Bruhl spies his chance to invite Clifford to his remote country home, bringing the only other copy of Deathtrap with him.

If Bruhl can kill the newcomer and pass the play off as his own, he could once again be the toast of Broadway.

A spine-chiller guaranteed to keep the audience on the edge of their seats. Deathtrap continues to hold the record as the longest running thriller in Broadway history.

It was subsequently made into a hit film starring Michael Caine and Christopher Reeve.

Call 0844 871 3011 or visit www.atgtickets.com/birmingham

Beautiful story of Carole’s rise to fame

A TALENT show finalist has the beautiful role of Carole King in a musical about the songwriter’s life.

Beautiful – The Carole King Musical is being staged at the Birmingham Hippodrome next week.

It stars Bronté Barbé, pictured, a finalist in Andrew Lloyd Webber’s BBC1 series Over The Rainbow in 2010. She has since appeared on stage in both London’s West End, and around the UK and was last seen locally at Wolverhampton’s Grand Theatre as Princess Fiona in Shrek – The Musical.

She will be joined by Kane Oliver Parry as King’s husband and songwriting partner Garry Goffin, with Amy Ellen Richardson and Matthew Gonsalves as fellow songwriters Cynthia Weil, and Barry Mann. Life Without George star Carol Royle is King’s mother Genie Klein and Barry Mann. Life Without George star Carol Royle is King’s mother Genie Klein and Adam Howden is Goffin.

The Olivier, Tony and Grammy Award-winning West End and Broadway musical tells the inspiring true story of King’s rise to stardom, from being part of a hit songwriting team with Goffin, to her relationship with Weil and Mann, to becoming one of the most successful solo acts in popular music history.

Along the way, she wrote the best-selling album Tapestry, which featured the likes of (You Make Me Feel Like) A Natural Woman and You’ve Got a Friend.

Other classics include It Might As Well Rain Until September and The Locomotion.

Showtimes are at 7.30pm, Tuesday to Saturday, with matinees on Wednesday and Thursday at 2pm and on Saturday at 2.30pm. Tickets are from £18. See bookings. birminghamhippodrome.com

Strictly legal – and one Elle of a musical

EastEnders’ Rita Simons, UK Eurovision entrant and former Coronation Street and Emmerdale actor Bill Ward star in a major new UK tour of Legally Blonde – The Musical, which runs at the Grand Theatre in Wolverhampton next week.

Centring on Elle Woods, who heads to Harvard Law School after her boyfriend dumps her for someone more serious, it runs from November 7 to 11.

Press & PR manager Scott Bird said: “This is a hugely exciting cast to be presenting Legally Blonde The Musical at the Grand Theatre in the first professional production of the show to play here.”

Showtimes are Tuesday-Thursday 7.30pm, Friday at 5pm and 8.30pm and Saturday at 2.30 and 7.30pm.

For tickets from £19.50, with a £3 booking fee, call 01902 429212 or visit grandtheatre.co.uk

Top acts appear in hair-raising festival

Big names appear in Wolverhampton as part of a comedy festival that will see more than 120 events staged across the city.

Jimmy Carr is at the Civic tomorrow (Friday), prankster Lee Nelson is at the Wulfrun on the same night and the wacky Milton Jones, pictured, at the Civic the following night.

In Birmingham, Joe Brown is at Town Hall on Saturday, the same night Jimi Mistry play at the Arena. ABC/Kid Creole perform at the Symphony Hall on Monday.

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ABBA MOMENTS

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WITH TEA OR COFFEE AND MINTS
Bookings between 12.30pm and 3.30pm
Only one satting so no rush!
Your table is yours for the duration and plenty of room
ADULTS £40
CHILDREN 5-10 YEARS £20
UNDER 5’S FREE

December 20th

Limited Seats

3 COURSES CHRISTMAS MEAL, DISCO
AND LIVE ENTERTAINMENTS FEATURING

ABBA MOMENTS

Limited Seats Available

For tickets from £19.50, with a £3 booking fee, call 0121 602 6238

In association with Express & Star
They always say never judge a book by its cover so we decided to check out The Park Lane Tavern in Colley Gate, and I have to say what was on offer in there was a total surprise.

It serves a curry option 7 days a week from midday which consists of a choice of 4 meats, turkey, beef, pork and gammon and accompanied by stuffed, Yorkshire puddings and up to 12 vegetables, topped off with what they call their "secret recipe gravy" known also as what mother used to make! All this for just £4.99 for a lunchtime meal or £5.99 evenings and Saturdays and £7.99 for Sunday lunch providing very good value by today's standards.

They also don't forget their mini diners with 'Kids Eat Free day' Monday to Saturday between 3pm and 6pm and during school holidays it's all Day Monday to Saturday.

But it doesn't stop there also have a full main menu consisting of the classic pub favourites such as steaks, mixed grill, burger, fish and chips, where the fish would not be out of place in any issue of "Moby Dick". To finish with something very tempting is the "Breakfast menu" that's on offer, if you have room after the size of meals you get at The Park Lane Tavern.

Then if that's not enough choice for you can also choose for the breakfast which is served Friday, Saturday and Sunday 3.30am until 11.00am. Their breakfast is a buffet style 'you can eat as long as you choose' to satisfy any diner from eggs 2 ways, bacon, sausage, mushrooms, baked beans, fruit, yoghurt, fruit salad, fresh tomatoes, toast & fried bread. There's even jam for your toast if you still don't fill all that.

Half Price Monday

They also host special evenings like their 'Half Price Monday' which has proven to be very popular, and why not, already reasonably priced selected main meals off their main menu (which includes steaks) at half price served between 5pm and 8pm every Monday. Also their psychic evenings where for £15 you get a reading from a medium and a carving, for those believers amongst you that must be a bargain.

You get a very friendly feeling when you enter The Park Lane Tavern and that's mostly down to the staff. Happy to see you and always keen to help. They have a lot of regular customers and it's been known for a customer's drink to be poured and waiting for them before they reach the bar, you don't see that at many places nowadays.

There are no airs or graces at The Park Lane Tavern, you get delicious food at great prices served by happy staff in a comfortable environment. No wonder this place has people returning time after time.

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SATURDAY’S TV: NOVEMBER 4

SATURDAY’S TV: NOVEMBER 4

SUNDAY’S TV: NOVEMBER 5

COMMERCIAL FEATURE
Unsubscribe (Channel 4, 9pm)
One-off drama, starring Indira Varma as a mother who receives an anonymous text message warning her that her 15-year-old daughter is being abused by her new boyfriend, who has just moved in with them. Unable to share her fears with anyone else, she succumbs to paranoia over the course of a weekend.

Carol Vorderman pays tribute to inspiring people

The Pride of Britain Awards will be on Channel 4 this Saturday, and this year there's a special surprise in store. The winners are all ordinary people who's stories are truly inspiring. We present our Summer Edition featuring the winner of Pride of Britain, a 10-year-old boy with a rare genetic condition whose story is truly inspiring. He has been honored by the Prime Minister for his bravery and trailblazing role at the age of 10. His story is truly inspiring and shows that ordinary people can make a difference in the world. We hope you enjoy reading about the inspiring stories of these ordinary people who have made an extraordinary impact on the world.
Double Crossword

Choose either quick or cryptic clues - both fit the same grid.

Cryptic Clues:

Across
1. Demobilized and not working (5,2,7)
2. Took the part of another (5)
8. Risk having a dog at home (6)
9. America gets a point advantage (5)
10. Changed circumstances may put a different complexion on it (6)
11. Depart agitatedly, it may explode (6)
12. A sign of twins (5)
13. They give actors difficulty - what a shame (4,5)
15. Sounds like a shortage of resin (3)
16. Divert and employ after morning (5)
17. Key material for piano-makers (5)
21. Eminent composer? (6,2,4)

Down
1. What the crafty one is after (5)
2. What the crafty one is after (5)
3. What the crafty one is after (5)
4. What the crafty one is after (5)
5. What the crafty one is after (5)
6. What the crafty one is after (5)
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24. What the crafty one is after (5)
25. What the crafty one is after (5)
26. What the crafty one is after (5)

Quick Clues:

Across
1. Immediately (8,4)
7. Dilate (5)
8. Smarten (5)
9. Blind (3)
10. Multiply (9)
11. Chance (6)
12. Clear (6)
13. Instruct in (5)
16. Insinuate quarks we hear (8)
20. It just isn’t on for cricketers (3)

Down
1. Faults (12)
2. Wrath (3)
3. Empty (6)
4. Attractive (6)
5. Ring (5)
6. Ban (13)
7. Sugary (5)
8. Grit (5)
9. Notify (5)
10. Conspicuous (9)
11. Multiply (9)
12. Obvious (5)
13. Allure (5)
14. Cavalier (5)
15. Impress (5)
16. Attractive (9)
17. Attractive (9)
18. Attractive (9)
19. Attractive (9)
20. Attractive (9)
21. Attractive (9)
22. Attractive (9)
23. Attractive (9)
24. Attractive (9)
25. Attractive (9)
26. Attractive (9)
FANCY a trip out to the countryside for some wholesome pub grub, great service and family-friendly atmosphere? If the answer is yes, you really ought to try out the Hinksford Arms.

The huge beer garden, vast selection of drinks and reasonably-priced menu should be enough to entice a family out to the greener side of Kingswinford. And when your 10oz rib eye steak is cooked to perfection too, it really does tick all the boxes.

Although we live around five miles from the pub, we hadn’t realised it was there until a colleague mentioned it was definitely somewhere to try out. We certainly thanked her for the recommendation because our visit to the venue in Swindon Road really was a lovely way to spend a Saturday evening in the autumn sunshine.

MUSIC

Sitting outside enjoying what I suppose you’d call an Indian Summer, our daughter, Annabelle, aged three, was able to blow off some steam on the wooden climbing frame, which sits in the middle of a huge, grassy beer garden.

One week of school, if you’re planning on eating later than 6pm when live music is on, it’s probably best to check when food is being served until as they sometimes close that room early.

Once inside we were handed the menus by a friendly waitress, who really went out of her way to cater for our order another drink and had a look at what to order. It was the classic pub menu so we knew exactly what to expect really, which is sometimes really refreshing.

For starters my wife Kelly went for the stuffed flat mushrooms, which came with either bacon and Stilton or tomato and brie – she went for the first option – and I choose pâté of the day, which was served with rustic bread. There was certainly plenty to share between two adults and a small child.

When it came to mains, unfortunately the salmon was off the menu, which Kelly had her heart set on, but she was still happy to try the pork medallion stack with black pudding, which came served in a wholegrain apple sauce with mashed potato and seasonal vegetables.

That, in turn, stumped me a little because I had my heart set on that but thought it would be worth trying two different meals at the very least, so played it safe and went for the rib eye steak. The fresh, home-cooked food is served all day every day, whether it’s a quick lunch or a family meal, but all the pub classics, sandwiches, ciabatta and food from the grill is all kept in ice and fresh.

The main reason my eye was drawn to the steak was probably because on our actual anniversary a few days before while living it up in Rynyl, I had ordered a one and it had been served completely over-cooked and the meat was also tough.

I ordered the steak medium rare and it was served perfectly. Kelly was delighted with her main too, with the pork also tender, the black pudding tasty and a little spicy, the mash smooth and creamy, and the wholegrain apple sauce rich and tangy.

Annabelle went for her usual option, tubes of pasta covered in a nice, tangy tomato sauce, served with two warm pieces of garlic bread. She enjoyed every bit and still had room for a children’s strawberry ice cream, which we all ended up sharing as we were pretty full by then.

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PREMIER ROOFING
Stonic fills little SUV role with style

By Ian Donaldson

Nobody needs a watch the size of a coffee cup’s saucer or a handbag you’d have trouble checking in as Ryanair cabin baggage, but lots of people want both of them – although probably not the same people.

And nobody really needs a small car that looks as though it could wade streams and shrug off life in the depth of a forest, even if it would drown with the first challenge and pine for its mummy on the other.

No, people want a small SUV because they think it looks good. Not for them the dull practicality of a mere hatchback; not when they want to be seen as adventurous types who stand out from the crowd.

And just at the moment the world can’t make enough small SUVs. Sales in Europe alone are expected to double to more than two million annually in the four years leading to 2020.

And these are cars with buyers driven by desire, not bargain hunters desperate for a discount.

It means they’ll happily pay a premium for the car of their dreams. And that makes the car manufacturers anxious to provide them with something to buy.

Enter the Kia Stonic, the South Korean car maker’s first entry to the small SUV segment and a new baby sibling to the firm’s biggest seller by far in the UK, the Sportage. The name is a mix of ‘speedy’ and ‘tonic’, if you were wondering.

Based on the new Rio small hatchback and built alongside it in Korea, the Stonic is offered in a smaller number of versions and aimed at buyers with a bit more to spend – there’s a premium of around £2,000 if you choose Stonic over Rio.

For the extra cash you’ll have a car that is a bit longer and wider than the Rio (now 4,140mm and 1,760mm respectively) but, crucially, 70mm taller and with a bit more ground clearance thrown in too. It means a car that fits its little-SUV role with style, even if there is no 4x4 version because hardly anyone would buy it.

Personalise

Instead, there’s a car that gives a buyer the chance to personalise their purchase with two-tone paint, picking out roof, door mirror casings and spoiler in contrasting colours, and choice of a pair of trim levels.

You will also find a dashboard that borrows heavily from the Rio, so it’s crisply finished, logically set out and very easy to read but a bit dull and black.

The top version is lightened a little by six-speaker sound system with steering wheel integrated controls, which includes 17ins alloy wheels, air conditioning, all-round electric windows, Bluetooth with voice recognition, rear parking sensors and a six-speaker sound system with steering wheel mounted controls.

Based on the new Rio hatchback and built alongside it in Korea, the Stonic is offered in a smaller number of versions

Out on a varied test route it delighted with sharp steering and a well controlled ride once out of town, where it turns a bit too firm, to produce a car that makes you want to keep on driving, enjoying a snick-snick gear change along the way.

A dash readout of 45.2mpg cemented the impression of a car that punches above its weight.

For another £800 you can move to a 1.6 litre 98bhp petrol engine. It will reach 107mph, hit 62mph in 12.2 seconds and travel 51.4 miles on a gallon in the official test, while putting out 125g/km of CO2 in the process. It is expected to remain more practical (and reasonably roomy front and rear and in the boot) than inspiring.

Kicking off the Stonic range is the £16,295 Stonic 2 in ‘2’ grade with a 1.4 litre 98bhp petrol engine. It will reach 107mph, hit 62mph in 12.2 seconds and travel 51.4 miles on a gallon in the official test, while putting out 125g/km of CO2 in the process. It is expected to remain more practical (and reasonably roomy front and rear and in the boot) than inspiring.

Another £200 and you’ll have the Stonic 2 in ‘3’ grade with a 1.4 litre 98bhp petrol engine. It will reach 107mph, hit 62mph in 12.2 seconds and travel 51.4 miles on a gallon in the official test, while putting out 125g/km of CO2 in the process. It is expected to remain more practical (and reasonably roomy front and rear and in the boot) than inspiring.

The top version is lightened a little by six-speaker sound system with steering wheel integrated controls, which includes 17ins alloy wheels, air conditioning, all-round electric windows, Bluetooth with voice recognition, rear parking sensors and a six-speaker sound system with steering wheel mounted controls.

The First Edition Stonics, from £19,695, add two-tone paint with a contrasting roof, smart key entry, auto air con, heated front seats and steering wheel and splashes of chrome on window trim and door handles.

Next engine up is a three-cylinder turbocharged petrol unit with 118bhp and a 115mph top speed and 9.9 seconds to 62mph, backed up with 56.5mpg and 115g/km in the official tests. It costs £16,995 and the £700 premium over the entry-level car makes it look like the bargain of the bunch.

The Stonic fills little SUV role with style, even if there is no 4x4 version because hardly anyone would buy it.
The Kodiaq SUV has the task of breaking new ground in the ever-expanding, highly competitive SUV market as Skoda's first ever seven-seater. And it is well up to the challenge.

As we have come to expect from Skoda, it covers pretty well all bases when it comes to choice – five engines (three petrol; two diesel), five trim levels, 2WD, 4WD, manual or DSG automatic transmissions and five or seven seats. Those two additional seats are standard in SE L trim and above and can be folded down into the floor when not in use. The long wheelbase and short overhangs of the Kodiaq allow for a reasonable amount of interior space and, although the middle row of seats can slide and fold, there is a high transmission tunnel which means piggy-in-the-middle will have to share foot space with those on either side.

In addition, the rear two seats are really only suitable for smaller members of the family, or for the school-run. The long wheelbase and short overhangs will have to share foot space with those on either side. For a size comparison in the Skoda range, the Kodiaq is slightly longer than the Octavia, while in the SUV segment as a whole, it sits between the Hyundai Santa Fe and the Kia Sorento.

The most economical of the engines tested was the robust 150ps 2.0litre diesel linked to the seven-speed DSG transmission which clocked an official average of 56.5mpg. Average economy of the smaller 1.4litre 150ps petrol unit was a touch under 40mpg and offers a nimble, composed and enjoyable drive. Well matched to the six-speed DSG, it tackled the steepest of inclines with ease.

Tackled the steepest of inclines with ease.

Choice will come down to usage. For those who put in the miles and expect the Kodiaq to earn its keep, clearly the diesel will tick all the boxes. For school runs and city centre commutes, the petrol will more than suffice.

Options well worth considering include the Drive Mode Select which allows the driver to adjust the engine management, gearing ratio and power steering input to suit varying road conditions. Ultra-modern connectivity, while not on everyone’s list, has been given a high priority in the Kodiaq, with the inclusion of the Skoda Connect online service which integrates all the traffic flow, Google Earth, fuel stops, parking info and the like, as well as an automatic emergency call in the event of an accident. In addition, a very useful app alerts the owner to any unauthorised movement of the car.

Fun stuff to look for as you check out the trim levels include umbrellas in the door panels, ice scraper on the fuel cap, foot-actuated power tailgate and rechargeable torch.

The Kodiaq range has a starting price of £22,190 for the 5 trim, five-seat, 1.4 litre 125ps manual petrol rising to £36,135 for the top spec seven-seat Edition, powered by the 2.0 litre 190ps diesel, 4x4 with the DSG transmission.

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Priory Park Boxing Club are warming up for their next venture following a successful debut on the international stage. The Dudley-based outfit hosted an England versus Ireland clash at The Copthorne Hotel in Brierley Hill that saw the club’s boxers take on fighters from the renowned Olympic Boxing Club in Galway.

And the event proved to be a huge hit inside and outside the ring much to the delight of chairman Paul Gough. The night served up a series of high-quality contests in front of a crowd of around 300 with the hosts emerging victorious thanks to victories from Ben Collins, Connor Jones, Jarred Grant, Tyriq Allison, Tomasz Grygiewicz and Sam Gwilt.

But as well as gaining plaudits for their efforts in the ring, Gough has been delighted with the feedback from the Irish visitors regarding the hospitality on display.

Gough left no stone unturned in his bid to ensure the Olympic contingent enjoyed their stay in the Black Country with a Go Karting night getting the boxers revved up for action. “It was one of the biggest events we have put on as a club, we had never staged an international contest before,” said Gough. “But it was a great success and the feedback we have had from Olympic has been outstanding.

“They travel all over the place for fights but they said they had never been treated like this and looked after so well. That’s nice to hear and huge credit to our club.

“It was an expensive show to put it on and it would not have been possible without our sponsors – Richardsons Capital, Barclays Bank, Willow Construction and Virtual Guard – so a massive thank you to them. We put all our fighters, coaches and officials up at The Copthorne for two nights. We really went out of our way to look after them.”

Training

“We picked them up from the airport and then took them to our gym for a training session, and then took them out for some food.

“On the first evening we had a Karrington competition at Halesowen, which went down really well and then had some food and drinks after. The lads absolutely loved that. We even had three Priory lads coming first, second and third in that, which was great.

“The Olympic lads had some down-time the following day before the show and then they were driven back to the airport the day after. A lot of hard work went into organising the show but it was worth it. It was great experience for our lads, as we will be going over there to fight next year in the return match.”

The standard of boxing also impressed Gough, who doubled up as match-maker with Olympic coach Mick Mogan. “All the bouts were close and the quality was very high,” said Gough. “Olympic are the No.1 club in Ireland and have won just about every competition going. One of their lads, Mike Delaney, is a four-time national champion and has won a bronze for GB.

“Their coach Mick Mogan trusted my judgement in matching up the fights and I trusted his. And it worked out because there were some great fights. As well as the international fights, a number of other contests made up a 18-hour hill with the youngest boxer aged 10 and the oldest 24, and we had around 300 people in.

Gough has designs on promoting further international shows in the future and may look north of the border.

“It has what my appetite for more shows like this and I would love to do an England-Scotland-Ireland contest. That could be one for the future,” he said.

As for the immediate future, the club are staging a development show at Brierley Hill Civic Hall on Saturday where there will be plenty of action featuring just Priory Park boxers.

And while the club’s boxing contingent continues to grow, Gough also runs various fitness classes at the club’s Priory Road base.

“The club is thriving at the moment. Our membership is rising and I am continually getting texts and calls from people asking if they can join,” he said.

“But it’s not just about boxing. We also run various fitness classes at the gym and the parents also get involved. It’s like one big happy family.”

Tickets for the development show are available priced £15 and £10. Call Paul Gough on 07883 012981.

Deeney antics spark the wrath of Hughes

FORMER Walsall striker Troy Deeney has been told by Stoke City boss Mark Hughes he “should know better” after sparking a late melee in Watford’s 1-0 home Premier League defeat.

In stoppage-time Stoke put the ball out of play after a player went down injured, but rather than pass the ball back the Hornets captain appeared to attempt a cross into the visitors’ penalty area.

Joe Allen reacted angrily but found himself being grabbed by the face by the burly Hornets striker as players from both sides squared up. Deeney and Allen were booked, but Stoke boss Hughes was less than impressed by Deeney’s conduct.

“I thought it was a bit unnecessary,” he said. “Clearly we kicked the ball out and the right thing to do in the spirit of the game is to throw it back.

“Deeney, the captain of the club, should know better but he shaped to play it into our box and that’s why Joe reacted. I’ve seen pictures of raised hands and thumbnaill in faces which is totally unnecessary.”

Woakes the all-round fit to fill Stokes’ void

ENGLAND all-rounder Chris Woakes has vowed to help fill the void left by Ben Stokes on the Ashes tour. Stokes has not bowled with the rest of the squad to Australia, having suspended following an incident outside a Bristol nightclub in September.

The 26-year-old Durham player has not been ruled out of the five-match Test series which begins in Brisbane on November 23, but he is out of contention for selection until further notice.

Captain Joe Root has suggested England are preparing to play the entire series without him, meaning Woakes and Moeen Ali, and wicketkeeper-batsman Jonny Bairstow, will have to replace those lost runs.

Great Barr-born Woakes said: “ Losing Ben as an all-rounder means my self, Moeen and I suppose even Jonny have more of a chance to prove our worth. I take my batting as seriously as possible. I know I have been batting at nine in recent Test matches but whenever I have played for Warwickshire I have obviously batted a lot higher than that.”

Event is all about Olympic fighter

THE world’s first-ever Punjabi MMA fighter is to visit the West Midlands next month for a charity event.

Olympian and UFC heavyweight Arjan Singh Bhullar will take part in a meet-and-greet event in Birmingham on November 25.

The Indo-Canadian fighter will also tell his life story at the event, which has been organised by the Wolverhampton-based Showfighter group.

Bhullar, aged 31, is currently ranked world number 19 in the MMA heavyweight division by the MMA World Rankings website.

The event is at The Hagley (Ibis Hotel) on Hagley Road, Birmingham. Funds raised will go to the Jet Singh Trust.

Bhullar has represented Canada internationally as a freestyle wrestler at university level, and competed in the 2010 Commonwealth Games and at the 2012 Olympic Games. He is from Richmond, British Columbia.

In August 2014, Bhullar had his first amateur fight as a mixed martial artist. He turned pro in November of that year.
BOSSE Dave King says there is a feelgood factor around Tividale after they made it three straight wins by overcoming Dudley Sports in the West Midlands League.

A Dan Smith brace saw The Dale run out 2-1 winners at Hillcrest Avenue on Saturday – a result which moved them up to third in the Premier Division.

Now five points behind leaders Wolverhampton Sporting Community, King’s men beat Buctleholme 3-2 on Tuesday night in the JW Hunt Cup and resume their league campaign against AFC Bridgnorth on Saturday.

But despite their impressive recent form, the manager says nobody at the club is getting carried away.

“Things are going well, we are enjoying the season and there is a good buzz about the place,” King said. “But we are well aware with have only played 13 games in a 38 game league season.

“I know it’s a cliché, but when you take into account the cups as well, it’s a long season and we are going to take it one game at a time. Crowds are on the up, we are playing some good football – long may it continue.

“But we’re in November so we won’t be getting carried away just yet.”

Elsewhere in the division, leaders Wolverhampton Sporting Community secured a 2-0 win over Dudley Town with Tom Hill netting both goals.

Black Country Rangers thrashed divisional whipping boys Wellington Amateurs 8-0. Smethwick fall to a 2-1 loss at Pegasus Juniors. Gornal Athletic secured a 4-1 win at Buctleholme.

的老式 Halesonians’ first round victory was another difficult trip for Dudley. They were 3-0 up before the break and kept their cool in the second half to win comfortably.

King of the road

DUDLEY rally driver Clive King tasted success in the Historic Rally Car Club Championship. King, aged 59, and his Sutton Coldfield co-driver Anton Bird won their class in the national event.

They were quickest on every stage of the final round on forest roads in Northumbria to clinch the 1300cc class in their Mini Sport-backed Cooper S.

King and Bird were runners-up in the championship involving more than 2,500 miles of travel during the season.

They ended the year on a high when they won the penultimate round on the Isle of Man and came home second when the Mini’s back axle broke.

ROD VANS FLY OFF WITH THE WIN

Banks’s hosts u-17 Euros games

**Boxing club packs punch in and out of the ring**

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**Page 39**

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**Free entry to Glassboys for servicemen**

**ARMED forces personnel can watch Stearncrc FC for free this weekend.**

The Glassboys’ clash with Witton Albion at the War Memorial Athletic Ground is the latest Remembrance Sunday and club officials are keen to show their support to Armed Forces personnel.

A spokesman said: “As a token of the club’s gratitude for all those who have served to keep us and our country safe over the years, we are offering all current and former servicemen and women free entry to the match.”

Servicemen or women should show ID confirming they have served in the forces or their Royal British Legion membership at the turnstiles.

A basket collection and sales of ‘Stearncrc Remembers’ poppy pin badges, at £1 each, will go towards the Royal British Legion.

Meanwhile, Stearncrc boss Gary Hackett praised his side for emerging with a 1-0 FA Trophy win over unbeaten Banford United last Saturday.

The Glassboys were made to battle by a fierce Sutton defence who are top the division below with a 100 per cent away record. But the win puts Hackett’s men into the second qualifying round of the FA Trophy and a tie at St Neots FC on Monday night.

Aaron Forde settled the scrappy clash, guiding inside the far post from close range after 61 minutes following strong work down the right by Kenny Diggey and Luke Shearer.

Glassboys followed up on Tuesday with a 4-0 win over Sutton Coldfield Town.

First half goals from Luke Shooter and new boy Kyle Perry were followed by second half strikes from Aaron Forde and substitute Josh Cooke.

**Opportunities at home and abroad**

**THERE were racing opportunities for athletes from Dudley Kingswinford Harriers over the weekend.**

Close to home a group travelled to Wolverhampton for the Coventry Cantor 10k, a race hosted by Wolverhampton & Bilston AC.

Another group travelled to Bridgport for a tough 10k starting in High Town before dropping down towards the river and inevitably climbing to a High Town finish. Guy Bonner came 13th in 41.56. John Andrews was 73rd in 50.29. Cilla Harding 15th in 1:01.02 and Ian Barrie was one sec after and at one place behind.

In the Frankfurt Marathon, Dave Norman finished in 3:14:40, 1,785th place, and Mark Homer 1,878th in 3:15:53, both dipping their toes in the international marathoning waters despite nursing themselves through the final few weeks of training trying to fend off injuries.

**Halesowen Town 2 Coalville Town 3**

**NEW signing Ethan Jones made an immediate impact with a goal for Halesowen, but they went down by the odd goal in five on Tuesday night.**

The visitors took a 1-0 lead when a low shot from captain Steve Towers squeezed inside Dan Platt’s post from 30 yards out. But the Yeltz were soon back on level terms in the 24th minute when defender Lee Torr was caught out by Jones, who then prodded a great finish.

Dan Creaney regained Coalville’s lead by slotting home from the penalty spot after Marcus Poscha upended Nathan Watson down the left of the box in the 38th minute.

**Rebounded**

Still the Yeltz came back and made it 2-2 in the 38th minute after another superb 20-yard strike from Aaron Forde. Towcester had a few more efforts but it was 2-2 at the break.

For the second half Hales were unable to breach the Towcester defence and the visitors added two further goals, Steve Deakin scoring a penalty, and Dom Stansfield converted the extras.

The home side had their chances to grab a win but couldn’t breach the Towcester defence and the final score was 19-74.

Following a flurry of morning activity, a representation of the Old Hales 4th Championship. King, aged 59, and his Sutton Coldfield co-driver Anton Bird won their class in the national event.

They were quickest on every stage of the final round on forest roads in Northumbria to clinch the 1300cc class in their Mini Sport-backed Cooper S.

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**Grantham 1 Halesowen 0**

**HALESOWEN went out at the first hurdle in the FA Trophy in Lincolnshire on Saturday.**

Grantham started the visitation from the first whistle and Dan Platt was called on to save from Michael Hollingworth in the third minute.

It took until the 51st minute for the winning goal to come, Curtis Burrows saw a shot blocked but Jordan Hempenstall followed up to score.

**WALSALL’S Banks’s Stadium will be a host ground for next year’s UEFA European Under-17 Championship finals.**

The annual tournament, for Europe’s 16 elite nations, will be played from May 4-20. The Banks’s will stage games along with Barton Albion, Chesterfield, Loughborough University, Rotherham United and St George’s Park, England, who won the World Cup last weekend with Wolves’ Morgan Gibbs-White among the scorers, won the European title in 2010 and 2014, and were runners-up to Spain in 2017. They qualify automatically as hosts.

Walsall Chief Executive Stefan Gamble said: “We are delighted to be one of the host stadi-ums.”

**OLD Halesonians’ first round victory was another difficult trip for Dudley. They were 3-0 up before the break and kept their cool in the second half to win comfortably.**

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For the second half Hales were unable to breach the Towcester defence and the final score was 19-74.

Following a flurry of morning activity, a representation of the Old Hales 4th Championship. King, aged 59, and his Sutton Coldfield co-driver Anton Bird won their class in the national event.

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