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december 2023

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for residents of wythall & hollywood

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Christmas is coming

Wishing you all a very merry Christmas.

Christmas will be just around the corner by the time this reaches you. So here's hoping you're all stocked up with goodies and gifts to see you through the festive season.

It can be the most wonderful time of the year, but it can also be the loneliest. If you have time why not try reaching out to any local people who live on their own to see if they'd like a cup of tea and a chat. However you spend your Christmas, here's hoping you have a lovely time and wishing you all a happy and healthy 2024.

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TUESDAY 19TH DEC - 9.30-5.00PM

WEDNESDAY 20TH DEC - 9.30-6.00PM

THURSDAY 21ST DEC - 9.30-5.30PM

FRIDAY 22ND DEC - 9.30-5.30PM

SAT 23RD DEC - 9.00-5.30PM

SUNDAY XMAS EVE - 8.30-1.00PM

CLOSED UNTIL WED 3RD OF JAN FOR A WELL DESERVED FAMILY HOLIDAY.
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community events

Autosport International

11-14 January, NEC, Birmingham

Autosport International is Europe's biggest motorsport show. Join thousands of motorsport and automotive trade professionals and enthusiasts. The Motorsport Show forms the centrepiece with stars and cars from all levels of motorsport on display. www.thenec.co.uk/whats-on/autosport-international/

Rob Olton as Tribute to Elton John

19 January, The Lake at Barston

This Elton John tribute act plays homage to the great man by performing classics like Rocket Man and I'm Still Standing through to Candle in the Wind, Can



You Feel the Love Tonight and Your Song. Sporting his unmistakable glasses and flamboyant outfits, this Elton tribute act truly offers an authentic performance that will leave guests captivated. www.thelakeatbarston.co.uk.

Agatha Christie's Murder On The Nile

19-21 January, The Core Theatre Solihull

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to present one of Agatha Christie's most intriguing murder mysteries, set in the exotic location of a boat on the river Nile. Fatal circumstances await when the idyllic surroundings are shattered by a shocking and brutal murder. For tickets call 0121 704 6962.

Tribute to Whitney Houston with Nya King

26 January, Nailcote Hall

'Without a doubt, the unprecedented replica of the voice of Whitney Houston. The incredible Nya King brings her amazing Soul and R&B style to pay tribute to this wonderful lady.' Party night includes 3 course meal, live entertainment and an after-show DJ. www.nailcotehall.co.uk

Learn to dance in a day

17 February, Land Rover Sports & Social Club

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GaryMM-1318, 24 Aug 2023



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a good read

By Natasha Donovan

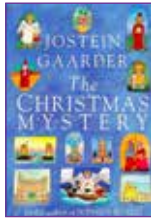
The Christmas Mystery

by **Jostein Gaarder**

Gaarder, is an author renowned for weaving intricate philosophical musings into compelling narratives. His best-known novel is probably *Sophie's World*, but here he gifts readers with a story, that at its heart is an advent calendar in prose, where every chapter unlocks a door to the mystery of Christmas.

Beginning in modern-day Norway, the tale unravels as young Joachim discovers a magical advent calendar in an old bookstore. As he opens each window, not only does he unveil a portion of the nativity story, but he also follows the journey of a little girl named Elisabet, who somehow travels back in time to Bethlehem. This dual narrative connects the ancient past to the present, reminding readers of the timeless resonance of the Christmas story. Gaarder's prose manages to make the vast journey across time and space seem intimate. The cast of historical figures and the diverse landscapes they traverse offer a panoramic view of human history, all leading to that poignant moment in Bethlehem. Through Elisabet's innocent eyes, readers experience the wonder, challenges, and humanity that has always surrounded this sacred event.

Beyond its captivating story, the book is also a reflection on faith, hope, and human connection. While it may appear to be a children's book on the surface, its layers of meaning will resonate deeply with readers of all ages. I came to it as an adult and love it every bit as much as Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. Like Dickens' work, it serves as a delightful reminder of the profound significance of the Christmas story, and I think it is a must-read during the holiday season.



The Girl Who Saved Christmas

by **Matt Haig**

Matt Haig weaves a whimsical, heartwarming tale that blends magic, adventure, and a potent message about the power of hope. Written as a follow-up to *A Boy Called Christmas*, the story easily stands on its own, inviting readers into a Victorian world where the magic of Christmas is threatened, and only a young girl's belief can restore it.

Amelia is an ordinary girl with an extraordinary heart. Living in Victorian London, she faces the kind of adversity that could easily douse her Christmas spirit. Yet her unwavering belief catches the attention of Father Christmas. When trolls, elves, and a festive calamity put Christmas in jeopardy, Amelia's hope becomes the beacon that might save the holiday for everyone.

Haig's language is imaginative and touching, weaving a rich tapestry of fantasy elements with real human emotions. His portrayal of Victorian London is atmospheric, juxtaposing the city's grimy reality with the luminous world of festive magic. Amelia's character development throughout the story is poignant, and readers will be rooting for her every step of the way.

The illustrations by Chris Mould further enhance the narrative, bringing Haig's world to life and adding visual depth to the prose.

In *The Girl Who Saved Christmas*, Haig reminds readers young and old of the enduring magic of belief and the strength to be found in hope. It's a delightful, touching read that deserves to become a modern Christmas classic.





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Tartiflette



Preparation time: 20 min

Cooking time: 1hr

Serves: 6

This is a decadent, savoury French gratin made with potatoes, salty bacon lardons, onions, and plenty of cheese. It's creamy yet crunchy, making it a perfect cold-weather comfort dish. It is traditionally made with Reblochon, but you can use any other firm washed-rind cheese or any pungent melting cheese like Fontina or Raclette.

Ingredients

1.2kg new/waxy potatoes, we used Charlotte
250 g smoked bacon lardons or diced pancetta
1 large onion, finely sliced
175 ml white wine
1 garlic clove, crushed
200 ml crème fraîche
400 g Reblochon cheese

(or substitute), chopped into 2cm pieces

Method

Bring a large pan of water to the boil and cook the potatoes for 15-20min, until just tender. Drain well, rinse briefly under cold water and set aside to cool. Fry the lardons over a medium heat until they are beginning to turn golden. Using a slotted spoon, lift them into a bowl, leaving any fat behind. Add the onions and a pinch of salt to the pan, lower the heat and cook gently for 10min, until softened. Turn up the heat and cook until the onions are become golden. Return the lardons to the pan along with the wine and

garlic. Bring to the boil and allow to reduce until most of the liquid has evaporated (about 5 minutes). Set aside to cool to room temperature, then stir in the crème fraîche and add some seasoning. Preheat oven to 200°C (180°C fan) gas mark 6. Slice the cooled potatoes into bite-size pieces, then transfer half of the slices to the base of a 2.5-3 litre ovenproof casserole dish. Spoon over half the crème fraîche mixture, followed by half the cheese. Repeat the layers to use up the other half of the ingredients. Cook in the oven for 20-25min, or until golden and bubbling. Leave to rest for 5min before serving with a green salad.

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In the Deep Midwinter

What is the Winter Solstice?

In the Northern Hemisphere, the Winter Solstice occurs when the 'top half' of the Earth tilts away from the Sun at its most extreme angle. This gives us the longest night and shortest day of the year. It normally falls on 21 December, and from this point on, the days will begin to lengthen until the Summer Solstice on 21 June.

The word 'solstice' comes from the Latin phrase for 'sun stands still'. This is because the sun appears to rise and set in the same two places for several days in a row.

Cultures through the ages have marked the Solstice and celebrated the triumph of light over dark.

Massive prehistoric monuments such as Stonehenge were built to align with the Winter Solstice sunrise.

The ancient Romans had a seven-day festival called Saturnalia, when everything would be reversed – men would dress as women and masters dressed as servants. People decorated their houses with greenery, lit candles and gave presents.



Celtic druids gave pieces of mistletoe as a blessing. They also began the tradition of the Yule log, which was burned to conquer the darkness and bring luck for the year ahead.

Many people still celebrate the Solstice today, and many of the customs have now become part of our traditional Christmas festivities.

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And the Christmas Number One is...

When I hear the words 'Christmas Number 1' I think about Slade's glam rock classic Merry Xmas Everybody (1973) or Fairytale of New York (1987) or even Cliff Richard's Mistletoe and Wine (1988). But over the years some...erm...less conventional songs have also made it to the top of the festive charts.

Like Ernie (The Fastest Milkman in the West) by Benny Hill (1971): An innuendo-heavy ditty of a milkman who falls in love with a widowed customer and later fatally succumbs to a pork-pie-wielding love rival in a dairy-versus-baked-goods duel.



Or Mr Blobby by Mr Blobby (1993), a novelty song created as part of a character on the show Noel's House Party, and which became a surprise hit.

And talking about TV shows, Bob the Builder got in on the act with his eponymous song Bob the Builder (2000)

Probably the most unconventional Christmas chart topper though was Killing in the

Name by the American band Rage Against the Machine (2009), some 17 years after its original release. It was adopted by a Facebook campaign and promoted heavily with the ultimately successful goal of blocking X Factor's winner Joe McElderry from claiming the top spot. It was also the first song to reach the Christmas number one through downloads alone.

The 2023 Official Christmas Number 1 will be announced on Friday, December 22. The full Christmas Top 40 will be counted down on BBC Radio 1's The Official Chart with Jack Saunders from 4pm.



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What an Experience!

Embrace the trend of giving experiences rather than physical gifts.

In an era dominated by consumerism the traditional approach to gift-giving has been anchored in the tangible: gadgets, clothes, jewellery, and the like. However, these material possessions, while often appreciated, can contribute to a cycle that emphasizes acquisition over connection. In contrast, the gift of an experience offers a memorable and engaging alternative.

One of the most compelling arguments for experiential gifting is its emphasis on human connection. Experiences, whether shared or given for someone to enjoy solo, have the unique capacity to bring people closer. They create stories and memories that can be cherished and revisited, long after the physical gift may have lost its lustre or fallen into disuse.

Moreover, experiences are inherently more personal than their material counterparts and from an environmental perspective, they leave a much lighter ecological footprint, aligning with principles of sustainability and responsible consumption. And experiences can contribute to personal growth and learning, whether it's mastering a new skill, discovering a hidden talent, or gaining a



new perspective, the intrinsic value of experiences is often educational and enriching.

Here are ten ideas that could make for memorable and thoughtful presents:

Cooking Class: Perfect for the foodie or aspiring chef, a cooking class can be a fun way to learn new culinary skills and recipes.

Hot Air Balloon Ride: For those who appreciate a touch of adventure and breathtaking views, a hot air balloon ride is a unique and exhilarating experience.

Concert Tickets: Music lovers would cherish the opportunity to see their favourite artist or band live in concert.

Art Workshop: A session with a local artist or a day at an art studio can be a wonderful gift for the creatively inclined.

Spa Day: Offer the gift of relaxation and pampering with a day at a spa, complete

with massages, facials, and other treatments.

A Masterclass subscription:

For the lifelong learners, a subscription to an online platform like Masterclass allows them to delve into a variety of subjects taught by experts.

Theme Park Annual Pass:

For rollercoaster-lovers. It provides a year's worth of fun.

Theatre Tickets: A night out at a play, musical, or dance performance can be a culturally enriching experience.

Wine Tasting Tour: A tour of a vineyard with wine tasting is a delightful experience for wine aficionados.

Adventure Sports Experience:

For the thrill-seekers, consider gifting an experience like skydiving, scuba diving, or rock climbing.

Why not gift your loved one an experience this year?

Happy Christmas.

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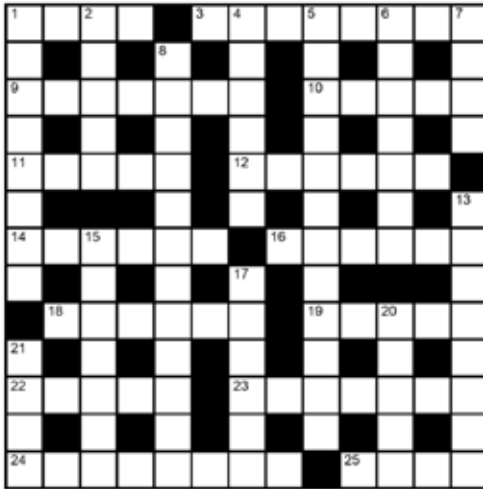
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crossword



clues

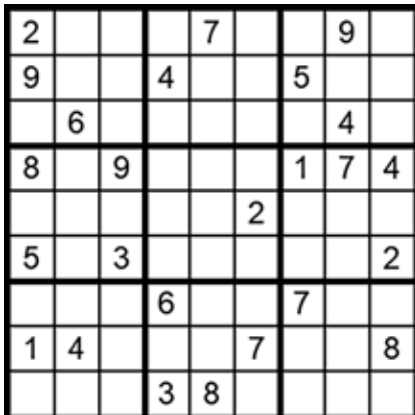
Across

- 1 Not dangerous (4)
- 3 Erect, upright (8)
- 9 Acrobat's swing (7)
- 10 Bowl, container (5)
- 11 Bare, in the buff (5)
- 12 Appeared, gave the impression (6)
- 14 Removed impurities (6)
- 16 Substance, material (6)
- 18 Indirect route (6)
- 19 Title, label (5)
- 22 Type of seafood (5)
- 23 Indian rice-based dish (7)
- 24 Lady-love, paramour (8)
- 25 Assistant (4)

Down

- 1 Devil-worshipper (8)
- 2 Thermos / vial (5)
- 4 Nevertheless (4,2)
- 5 Mealtime etiquette (5,7)
- 6 Most snug (7)
- 7 Touch down (4)
- 8 Tailor, seamstress (12)
- 13 Fame, influence (8)
- 15 Antennae (7)
- 17 Families, clans (6)
- 20 Florida city, seaside resort (5)
- 21 Bathed, moved through the water (4)

answer on page 22



how to play sudoku

It's simple!

Fill in the grid so that each row, column and 3x3 box, contains the numbers 1 through to 9 with no repetition. You don't need to be a genius. These puzzles use logic alone. Watch out! Sudoku is highly addictive.

answer on page 22



Mark O'Sullivan

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local police contact for wythall & hollywood

Telephone: 101

Health

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Wythall Lane Surgery	0121 628 2345
Hollywood Medical Practice	01564 822642
Hollyoaks Medical Centre	01564 823182

Council

Bromsgrove District Council (main switchboard)	01527 881288
Bromsgrove District Council (emergency out of hours)	01527 871565

Utilities

Electricity power cut	105
Gas leak	0800 111 9999
Severn Trent Water (supply & emergencies)	0800 783 4444

Travel

National Rail Enquiries	03457 48 49 50
First Bus Worcestershire	0345 646 0707

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

Sudoku Solution

from page 20

S	A	F	E	V	E	R	T	I	C	A	L
A	L	N	V	A	O	A					
T	R	A	P	E	Z	E	B	A	S	I	N
A	S	E	N	L	I	D					
N	A	K	E	D	S	E	E	M	E	D	
I	L	O	M	S	P						
S	I	F	T	E	D	M	A	T	T	E	R
T	E	W	T	N	E						
D	E	T	O	U	R	N	A	M	E	S	
S	L	R	I	E	I	T					
W	H	E	L	K	B	I	R	Y	A	N	I
A	R	E	E	S	M	G					
M	I	S	T	R	E	S	S	A	I	D	E

Crossword Solution

from page 20

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