Backlash over petition bid to change street’s name

PROUD TO BE FROM BELL END

A CAMPAIGN by residents of Bell End to change the name of their road appears to have hit the buffers.

Now other people have started a rival petition to keep the name and it garnered almost 2,000 signatures within hours of appearing on change.org, while the petition to get rid of the name stood at around 50.

Campaigners’ request for a petition to change it to a similar sounding – but less offensive – name was dismissed.

Bell End has received enormous backing from readers of The Chronicle’s sister newspaper the Express & Star, with nearly 90 per cent of more than 4,000 readers taking part in an online poll calling for the name to remain.

Lauren White said: “Never once have I had a problem when I’ve told someone I live ‘just off Bell End’, if anything it’s always caused a little giggle and more often than not, a conversation starter.”

Mine

The new petition was started by Linda George and is called ‘Leave the Historic Name of Bell End Alone!’ A statement says: “Bell End is an historic name in Rowley Regis, believed to be named after a mine in the locality.”

Chelsie Stanaway said the name would never die, even if it were to be changed. “Once a Bell End always a Bell End,” she said.

The street is in Rowley Regis and Blackheath wards. Sandwell Council said it would look at the issue if residents sent them a petition.

Councillor Barbara Price said changing the name would be a ‘lengthy and complex’ process. “There would have to be a public consultation and the Post Office would also be involved,” she added.

REPORT BY PETER MADELEY

NOW IT’S BEDTIME FOR TEDDY OUR PRIZE PET

ONE week on and all this attention is just wearing out poor Teddy. For those readers who missed the announcement last week this much-loved moggy – now seen chilling on the bed – won our Animal Crackers competition with the picture of him in the garden dovecote.

According to owner Vicky Sterrett, from Bloxwich, he just loves to get himself into lots of tight spots but here he is looking a lot more laid back. Obviously loving all the attention, he was a very clear winner with our many readers who emailed or posted in their votes.

Shortlist

From the shortlist of 10, taken from the more than 500 entries we had sent in, he was a clear winner. Vicky, from Bloxwich, said Teddy found her four years ago, arriving on her doorstep as a stray. She found that he wasn’t microchipped and was about four years old. Vicky fell in love instantly and decided to keep him. “We have always thought he was a superstar and winning this competition has proved that other people think so as well,” said Vicky.

“After speaking to Teddy we have decided to donate the £100 prize money to Walsall & Wolverhampton Cats Protection for all the amazing work they do,” Vicky added.

Our shortlist included dogs, cats, guinea pigs, a tortoise, rabbit and even a hedgehog but it was Teddy who captured so many hearts.

He has a cheeky personality and is a very busy boy spending most of his time in the garden, in the greenhouse and of course the dovecote. This was specially made by a carpenter at a local day care centre for adults with learning disabilities.

INSIDE

HONOUR FOR SCOUTMASTER

COMMUNITY

Hopes on future of derelict church

A CHURCH that has stood empty since it closed a year ago could be transformed this year, thanks to a Halesowen dance company.

St John’s United Reformed Church in Stourbridge went on the market in May after it shut following its final service on New Year’s Day 2017.

Dance company, Danse Vivante said it wanted to keep the church as a community space but for sale signs have remained at the building since. Pippa Coley, who has trained with the dance academy for four years, said the interest was still there.

She said: “We are still interested in it and at the minute and we are going through the board of commissioners for the final decision. It is a long process but they are keeping us informed. We have high hopes for the future for it.

The group says it hopes to keep the Grade II building intact, but with minor alterations inside. Councillor Nicolas Barlow, who represents the Woolaston and Stourbridge Town ward, said: “This is great news that the building will be utilised”.

FIREFIGHTERS

Documentary starts with store explosion

A DOCUMENTARY revealing life on the front line in West Midlands Fire Service will air next week with the first episode showing the response to a bomb explosion in Blackheath.

Firefighters have been given state-of-the-art heatproof helmet and body cameras to showcase their daring roles first hand.

The series called ‘Into The Fire’ begins on the Freeview and satellite Really Channel on Monday at 8pm. It becomes the latest fly-on-the-wall series highlighting the work of the emergency services in the West Midlands, after the series ‘Ambulance’ was shown on BBC One looking into the role of West Midlands Ambulance Service.

The first Into The Fire episode focuses on a busy day, just five days after the Manchester terror attack, where fire crews dealt with an explosion in a toilet cubicle at the Sanctuary’s store in Blackheath.

A toilet block was put behind bars following the incident on May 27.
A RESPECTED Scout leader with more than 80 years’ experience is among the unsung heroes in Dudley to be recognised in the New Year’s Honours.

Derek Elton has been awarded an MBE at the age of 96 for decades of service to scout groups in Stourbridge.

As a grandparent has been part of the scouts from the age of 15 and is still involved four years shy of his 100th birthday, Mr Elton, from Wollaston, was awarded the Silver Wolf – the highest scouting accolade – in 2008 and admitted news of his award came as a huge shock.

“I am very, very shocked to receive it,” he said. “I am absolutely thrilled to bits but it came as a huge shock.”

Mr Elton joined the 1st Stourbridge St Thomas group as a teenager and went on to become cub master. He is less actively involved these days but remains president of the Kinver Scout Camp and vice-president of the West Mercia Scout County. Meanwhile, a former housing association boss who provided homes to vulnerable families across Dudley has also been made an MBE.

Jane Clarke, 62, retired last year after almost 30 years at the helm of Churches Housing Association of Dudley and District (CHADA). She said: “I can’t quite believe it. I led an incredible team of very committed people who are the ones who really deserve this award.”

Kevin Campbell, of Vickers Walk, Stourbridge, pleaded not guilty to eight driving charges.

A 28-year-old motorist denied driving dangerously and attempting to cause grievous bodily harm to seven people during an incident near a Stourbridge school nearly 16 months ago.

Mr Austin also responded to an online petition by local tougher measures to be taken against the region’s hospitals.

AN MP has vowed not to give up on his campaign to abolish hospital car parking charges.

Dudley North MP Ian Austin said ‘common sense must be done’ after figures showed the region’s hospitals were raking in millions in parking fees.

Hospitals in the Black Country raked in more than £15m in parking charges in just one year, new figures show.

Dudley Group NHS Foundation Trust, which runs Russells Hall, made £471,000 in 2016/17, but most of the parking revenue was taken by a private finance initiative firm.

Parking at Russell Hall ranges in price from £1.50 for up to 30 minutes to £5.60 for up to 24 hours.

Sandwell and West Birmingham Hospitals NHS Trust, which runs Sandwell General Hospital and Rowley Regis Hospital, made £2.4m. Parking at Sandwell General costs £2.80 for up to an hour to £3.30 for up to four hours. At Rowley Regis it costs £2.80 for up to six hours and £3.50 for up to 24 hours.

Mr Austin said: “I don’t see how we should pay such a huge amount when we want to go for hospital treatment or see a loved one in hospital.

“It is especially bad for people who are going to and from hospitals on a regular basis.

Mr Austin also responded to an online petition by local tougher measures to be taken against the region’s hospitals.

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A BUSINESS group has revealed its primary focus for 2018 will be to support traders in its home town. The Halesowen Business Improvement District (BID) says it will hold regular networking and workshop events for people to get involved.

The group, which operates in Halesowen town centre, has also called on businesses to get in touch to help bring about the suggested changes to boost footfall and visitor experience.

Wayne Edwards, who is chairman of the Halesowen BID, said: “The year 2018 will be a fantastic year for businesses in Halesowen.

“Not only will they have the unwavering support of the BID, the BID will also work to encourage outside trade and investors in Halesowen by marketing to the outer regions of the Black Country.”

The BID is recruiting a business manager to help establish a strong business community.

A digital directory for businesses in Halesowen could also be launched as part of ambitious plans to boost trade. Mr Wheeler said: “You would be surprised how many people aren’t aware what is in the town.

“The BID was launched last year after traders backed the move following a ballot and approval was given by Dudley Council bosses. The BID has a five-year contract. See halesowenbid.co.uk website.

THE town’s MP has spoken out against plans to close two GP surgeries in Halesowen and has urged patients to have their say over the proposals.

The two surgeries, currently form of a group of three, are set to be merged into one surgery based at Halesowen Health Centre on Birmingham Street.

A six-week consultation on the closure of Coombewood and Tenlands surgeries ends on January 22, which will then report to the Dudley Clinical Commissioning Group for a final decision.

Halesowen and Rowley Regis MP James Morris said: “GP services work best when they are in the heart of the communities that they serve, this is so that patients can form a relationship with their GP and for them to be as easily accessible as possible. I am not convinced that these plans would benefit patients, but are being solely made as a business decision.

“The Conservative MP was also concerned about the timing of the consultation exercise.

“I want to make sure that all patients have an opportunity to participate in this consultation, to ensure that an accurate view of these proposals is heard. It’s really important each and every patient takes part.

“I do have some concerns about the way in which this consultation is being handled, especially as it is over the Christmas and New Year break.”

“T he will be watching this very closely to make sure it is a fair and transparent process.”

In a letter to patients Dr Ruth Hearn, from Stourside Medical Practice, which runs the surgeries, said money saved from running two sites would be spent on providing an extra GP on one day a week.

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Fairy Bev delights in a panto ‘masterpiece’

The Prodigy, Wolverhampton Civic Hall

ELECTRO giants The Prodigy put on an incredible show at Wolverhampton with thunderous bass, tremendous energy and a phenomenal lights show.

Despite having been in the industry for 27 years, the Essex band gave a stellar performance packed with hit after infectious hit, barely coming up for air between songs.

The city centre venue was heaving with fans, from young teens to 40-something ravers, many of whom donned fluorescent clothing and glow sticks.

The crowd on the floor was a sea of bodies, each of them jumping and dancing to the array of fan favourites blasted by the band.

With the group playing beneath mesmerising lighting made up of dozens of spotlights, and singing into UV microphones, it was truly a sight to behold.

Songs performed by the band spanned their highly-successful career, from nineeties hits Firestarter, Breathe and Smack My B**ble, through to noughties hits Omen, Voodoo People, Like A Man to Who Loves You?, this is a show as smart as the quartet’s suits and as slick as their synchronised moves.

It also cleverly staged, often switching the perspective to give a back stage view.

The language pulls no punches and the show is fast-paced with lots of humour to balance the drama and tragedy.

Ultimately it depends on the four young men in the spotlight and in this production they are exceptional – Michael Watson is totally believable as the ambitious Valli, delivering that famous falsetto but also able to croon; Simon Bailey is the crooked Tommy Devito; Declan Egan the shy but brilliant Gaudio; and Lewis Griffiths the unassuming Nick Massi.

Their sensational sound prompted a standing – and dancing – ovation from the Birmingham audience.

Jersey Boys continues at the Alex until January 6 and visits Wolverhampton Grand from August 28 to September 6.

KIRSTEN RAWLINS

Cinderella, Birmingham Hippodrome

IF you spot a fairytale coach winging its way across the skies over the West Midlands during the next few weeks, you can be sure that it’s heading to Birmingham.

The Hippodrome is known for doing it bigger and better than anywhere else and this year is no exception, as Qdos Entertainment deliver on every level, providing stunning scenery, stars, sumptuous costumes and the best special effects in the business, to ensure the venue maintains its place at the top of the pantomime Christmas tree.

Its stellar cast includes the multi-talented soul diva, radio presenter, musical theatre actress and now one third of newly formed trio, Leading Ladies, Wolverhampton-born and bred, Beverley Knight; Prince of the Strictly ballroom, the charismatic Danny Mac; and, of course Birmingham’s favourite panto comedian, the incomparable Matt Slack, who returns to the city for the fifth year running due to unprecedented demand.

It’s two and a half hours of laugh out loud comedy, fun and frolics. The staging and choreography are second to none. The adult humour does tip the balance very slightly but is never offensive, while the traditional silliness and cringe-worthy jokes reign supreme.

This is Beverley’s first voyage into pantoland and she certainly is a ‘Fabulous Fairy’ completely stealing the limelight from the off, as her famous golden tones ring out as she flies high above the audience on a giant butterfly to open the show.

Fairy Godmother Bev takes everything in her stride, including the ad-libs and mischief making of pantoland royalty, The Grumbleweeds, whose well worn but classic comedy she more than matches, of panto royalty, The Grumbleweeds, whose well worn but classic comedy she more than matches, holding her own while they create mayhem.

The beautiful and talented Suzanne Shaw is the perfect Cinders, whilst Ceri Dupree and David Dale are suitably hideous as the Ugly Sisters. Producer/director, Michael Harrison, has given a ‘The Sopranos’-like twist in this group formed by friends who grow apart

THE familiar rags to riches story about a group formed by friends who grow apart is given a ‘The Sopranos’-like twist in this all-conquering jukebox musical based on the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.

When they started in New Jersey in the early ‘60s the gang of Italian-American neighbourhood pals were more successful at getting criminal records than hit records.

That past was to catch up with them and split the band when they had become one of the most popular groups in America.

That success, based largely on Bob Gaudio’s songwriting genius and Valli’s helium vocals, was not with the Woodstock generation but with the people who worked on production lines or flipped burgers – people like them.

Filled to the brim with classic Four Seasons songs, from Sherry to Ego Doll, Walk Like A Man to Who Loves You?, this is a show as smart as the quartet’s suits and as slick as their synchronised moves.

It also cleverly staged, often switching the perspective to give a back stage view.

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**Brain injury saves crash driver from being sent behind bars**

LIFE-CHANGING injuries suffered by drink-driver Anthony Evitts in a crash while driving a car taken without permission have saved him from prison.

His brother was thrown through the windscreen and a young woman passenger close to death when disaster struck in Birmingham Road, Stourbridge, in March.

The vehicle had a suspension fault the 28-year-old knew nothing of when he illegally took the motor, Wolverhampton Crown Court heard. Mr Edward Soulsby, prosecuting, explained that the defendant, who is from Halesowen, lost control of the car on a bend at speed. A sample taken later gave a reading of 94 milligrams of alcohol per 100 millilitres of blood. The legal limit is 80.

The woman passenger’s back was broken in four places as well as suffering head injuries, punctures to both lungs, a broken pelvis and facial scarring.

Mr Oliver Woolhouse, defending, said the suspension fault was one of the reasons why Evitts lost control.

Steering wheel

**Shame**

The lawyer continued: “He remembers nothing of what happened but lives with the guilt, shame and remorse of knowing he was responsible.”

The defendant still has major problems from a brain injury. He now receives disability living allowance and is cared for by his grandmother. Mr Woolhouse said: “It will be a very slow road to recovery, if ever it comes.”

Evitts, of Wesley Avenue, pleaded guilty to aggravated vehicle taking causing injury, drink-driving, having no insurance or a driving licence.

Recorder Abigail Nixon told him: “Without the injuries you suffered you would be going straight to prison and you would no doubt swap a prison sentence for those injuries. You have now got to live with what you have done.”

Evitts received a 12-month jail sentence suspended for two years with rehabilitation orders. He was also disqualified from driving for 12 months.

**Body in canal thought to be of missing man**

A BODIF found in a Black Country canal is believed to be that of missing man Simon Smith, from Brierley Hill.

The body was found as part of working with different production teams during the year at one of the country’s top theatres. The four students had to pass intense auditions which saw them vie with students from other colleges in the Midlands.

Gemma Sherratt, dance course leader at Halesowen College, said: “We are really proud of our students, they have worked extremely hard to secure these prestigious positions. “We are also really pleased to have these prestigious positions,”

Students will dance at Hippodrome

FOUR dancers from Halesowen College will be dancing in productions at Birmingham Hippodrome this year. Ellie Baker, Megan Aitchison, Abbie Sanders and Alarna Parkes will be working with different production teams during the year at one of the country’s top theatres. The four students had to pass intense auditions which saw them vie with students from other colleges in the Midlands.

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So Ringo what have you done to merit this?

A GREATER mind than mine is needed to work this one out. Back in 1965, when Beatlemania was at its peak, Ringo Starr was appointed an MBE, along with the rest of his bandmates.

In 2000 when the group finally broke up having released their final album there were further honours, presumably because the MBEs were thought to suffice.

Paul McCartney was given a knighthood in 1997, but nothing more for Starr, presumably because the MBE was still considered sufficient. Indeed, there was no mention of him in the Queen's Birthday honours, and that was only six months ago.

So Ringo’s honour is obviously for something he has achieved since June last year, something that completely escapes me in these days of the Beatles. Perhaps somebody can tell me what it is?

DAVID

DAVID Beckham reveals that at times of stress, he plays with Lego to help him relax. Which reminds me of a joke dating from the sixties, which ran:

"It's hereboss, it's meant to be a cock-erel," he shouted nervously. "I wanted to show Victoria I am not thick, that I can do a jig-

saw puzzle, but it's so hard."

Looking slightly confused, Ferguson asked Beckham what the puzzle was.

"It's her boss, it's meant to be a cockerel," he said, "but I can't arrange all the pieces, it doesn't look right."

Ferguson looked down at Beckham's shoulder.

"Don't worry David," he said, "just put the cornflakes back in the box."

EXCITING news from the Government, which is spending millions to ensure all mainline trains have "gives incentives to public con-

nectivity". Apparently, this means every passenger will be able to watch video of the gameellops inspectors who will have to inter-

rupt every passenger from their viewing.

Can you imagine anything more hate-

ful? While carrying on my way of thinking, I was wondering. Can you imagine anything more hateful?

Can you imagine anything more hateful, if you put your mind to it?

What is the future for the thirties, if you put your mind to it, and put it all in a box."

Call me a luddite, but wouldn’t you pre-

fer that your money was spent in a bit of real "connectivity", like reopening some of the railway lines around the Black Country?

Donald Trump – if somebody takes a pot-

shot will guards shout: "Donald, duck!"

Gary Linker – takes TV licence fees from

more than 15,000 homes to employ him

The Krankies – readers asks: "After Scottish

independence, who gets custody of them?"

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February

TALKING POINT

What’s this obsession with TV and smuggling?

FOR some reason the subject of smugg-

ling has suddenly become a hot topic and not just in the stories which make the fake

news these days. Take a recent week-
tend TV schedules for example.

First we had Sir Tony "Time Team" Robinson in Cornwall with his Walking Through History, and he was determined to dig up all the facts he could on smugg-

ling there.

It was an interesting insight into a pre-

canous but lucrative industry, but blow me down, who was this in hot pursuit of the Thief Team man? Only one of the West Midlands finest, but with Julie Walters was an affable companion along scenic routes. And from Cameron's lowing in the Cornish scenery, she was equally happy poking about for clues to how smugglers operated.

Then just as we thought there was nothing more to this subject, last month recalling a year of everything from fake

news to Bake Off, cold snaps and the TV li-

cense fee.

JANUARY: A reader asks, if somebody takes a pot-shot at President Trump, will the body-

guards shout: "Donald, duck!"

FEBRUARY: The Government says old folk occupying big houses will be "gives incentives to public con-

nectivity". A reader asks: "Will the same criteria apply to the stately piles of England: Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle and Clarence House?" Any more questions like that, my lad, and you’ll find yourself in a very large dwelling. The Tower.

MARCH: A reader inquires: "After Scottish independence, who gets custody of the Krank-

ies?"

APRIL: Still on religion, Easter eggs and such-

like, a reader points out that there is no such person as the Archbishop of Cadby.

MAY: A reader writes: "Historians have re-

vealed that they may have found the location in Suffolk where St Edmund is buried. It is thought to be in the town of Bury St Edmunds. How much do these people earn, and where do I ap-

ply?"

JUNE: The unapproachable leader, the official election leaflet has just arrived from our local Labour candidate. It contains not a single men-

tion of Jeremy Corbyn.

JULY: If you haven't done the sums yet, it takes the TV licence fees from more than 15,000 homes to employ Gary Linker at the BBC for a year.

AUGUST: A close look at the neo-Nazi march-

ers in Charlottesville reveals the usual surging, dead-eyed you see at any far-right gath-

ering. Whenever you meet the Master Race, it’s always a disappointment.

SEPTEMBER: Pte Leith, the Bake Off judge, pins the blame on our “centrally heated houses and sedentary lifestyle” for contributing to obe-

sity. Nothing to do with all those cakes, then?

OCTOBER: Is anyone else surprised that, while the weather forecasters queued up to ex-

plain why the sky had turned orange a few days ago, no-one was aware in advance that it was going to happen? Not so much forecasting as astro-

casting.

NOVEMBER: If Moscow really is planting fake

news to bring down the West, expect it to be a well-concealed operation. You know how it is. You open one Russian troll and there’s another troll inside.

DECEMBER: Hell’s teeth. If this cold weather continues with baby-boomers in our huge palaces may be forced to spend our winter fuel allow-

ance on winter fuel. That was never the plan.
In praise of these ‘special’ individuals

TWO of the highlights of my work on the run up to Christmas was working with very special groups of individuals. Generations apart both groups fall into the special needs area (although whatever they appear to lack they make up for in unachievable enthusiasm).

Halas homes in Halesowen run a day centre as part of the complex and I have been working with the staff and a group of individuals on their festive play while also accompanying them with their amazing sing and sign lady to Bromsgrove Town Hall for a morning of carols.

Letters to the Editor

POST Dudley Chronicle, Chronicle Editorial, 51-53 Queen Street Wolverhampton, WV1 1ES

EMAIL dudleychron@ expressandstar.co.uk

Letters should be brief and MUST include name, address and telephone number. The Editor reserves the right to condense letters.

LEAD ON! Dog tired of the bad owners

WALKING my dogs I met someone walking two large dogs off the lead in the street. As I knew one could be aggressive I asked the owner to put them on the lead, but got a load of abuse. The next day on Sheepwash Nature Reserve a man walking two pit bull type dogs had them off the lead, and when asked to put them on a lead, refused and walked off.

It seems not much will be done unless we attack. I don’t give my small dogs much chance if bitten by dogs weighing around 80lbs plus, especially as one of my dogs is diabetic and almost blind.

It’s no wonder why we have all the laws surrounding dogs, when owners like this just ignore them!

JENNY JAMES
Dudley

when you hear about the special needs area (although whatever they appear to lack they make up for in unachievable enthusiasm).

Halas homes in Halesowen run a day centre as part of the complex and I have been working with the staff and a group of individuals on their festive play while also accompanying them with their amazing sing and sign lady to Bromsgrove Town Hall for a morning of carols.

Answers needed on green belt

YOUR front page article (Dec 21) announces that Mayor Andy Street ‘backs green belt plea’. However, all the mayor has committed himself to, from the attributed quote, is ‘I very much hope...no exceptional condition’ will be met.

He refers to the Black Country Core Strategy, which contains a section reviewing the role and extent of the green belt. This makes it plain that the critical aspect of all this is the Review of the Core Strategy, which is referenced by Cllr Harley who ‘could not promise open land would not be built on’.

I have previously asked for, from the mayor, the mayor and Cllr Harley to attend a consultation meeting in Halesowen and answer questions on the green belt.

Mick Freer’s comments that he hopes ‘they (Measures Street and Morris) lead will encourage other politicians to follow suit’ needs to be put to a rather stiffer test.

JOHN PAYNE
Halesowen

Please obey junction box rules

JUST got back from shopping at Asda in Pearson St, Brindley Hill.

I would have been a lot quicker and a lot less stressed if road users understood or obeyed the rule of the cross-crossed boxes at junctions.

As I approached the lights at the junction of Venture Way and Mill Street the lights were on green but because cars had pulled into the box I couldn’t go anywhere.

The lights changed back to red for me and traffic moved but when they had changed back to green a bus had come along and pulled up at the bus stop just round the corner.

All the traffic coming up from Merry Hill followed it, so again I was unable to move. I finally moved at the traffic light. The rule is if you cannot exit the box on the other side do not enter it!

JENNY JAMES
Walsall

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Keep fit thanks to a pole dancing champion

Pole dancing and aerial exercise is coming to Dudley.

The Academy will be opening at a former industrial unit in Angel Street and it is being co-led by World Pole Double Champion Jade Flash.

The academy will offer people looking to get fit with ‘an alternative, fun way’ to shed the pounds.

The academy will feature aerial equipment, competition-height poles and a dance studio. It is scheduled to open on Saturday (January 6).

Mrs Flash, aged 25, says the academy will offer people looking to get fit with ‘an alternative, fun way’ to shed the pounds.

Mrs Flash, from Quinton, has danced since the age of three. She did a three-year performing art course at Stratford-upon-Avon College before starting work on musicals.

Her dancing career has taken her overseas, including Mexico, and she even joined the circus on returning to the UK, becoming an aerial artist with the Charles Chipperfield Circus.

After working as a fitness instructor, and competing, she decided to open the new academy in the Black Country.

She said: “Because I live in Halesowen I decided to look for a unit nearby, and as soon as I saw the place I knew it was right.”

Jade Flash, 25, of Quinton, is opening The Jewels Acdemy in Dudley

IT is a fitness lesson – with a difference.

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Mrs Flash, who will be running the academy alongside 17-year-old Robyn Churchill, said: “Many people find it hard to motivate themselves at a gym but this is an alternative, fun way for people to improve their fitness.”

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Robyn Churchill, 17, of Stourbridge, left, and Jade Flash, 25, of Quinton, are opening The Jewels Academy in Dudley

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Gas showroom goes to museum

The demolished gas showroom site off High Street in West Bromwich which will take its place at the museum

A picture of the building from years gone by

IT stood on the High Street for three quarters of a century but the famous West Bromwich Gas Showroom has now vanished from view.

But it won’t be long before the landmark building reappears – five miles away at the Black Country Living Museum.

The old showroom, which became run-down having been derelict for years, has been knocked down, altering the look of the High Street, with sections to be brought back to life at the famous attraction.

Museum bosses were keen to get their hands on the building to add to its impressive list of iconic buildings from years gone by. The showroom dates back to the 1940s and was a prominent feature of the town centre.

Council chiefs in Sandwell also wanted rid of the old showroom, which they feared could pose a danger due to its crumbling state, and will now look to develop that part of the High Street.

The Gas Showroom is expected to form part of the museum’s new 1800s and 60s town, which will be created over the next five years as part of a multi-million pound expansion at the attraction.

The ambitious plans to expand the museum on Tipton Road in Dudley have moved forward with the submission of a planning application.

The museum is seeking to install buildings, structures, a tramway extension and an access road as part of the project to have a new period of history that visitors can enjoy.

Dudley Council has received the planning application and it will now go before bosses who will make a decision.

The move was welcomed by ward councillor Alan Finch, who said: “I welcome this 100 per cent.

“It is a fantastic project. The Black Country Living Museum is the hub of Dudley, so anything that will improve it is much welcomed.

Meanwhile, a 100-year-old tram that was once used as a garden shed is back on the tracks at the museum...

Tram 5 is now operating at the attraction after a £75,000 overhaul. The single-decker tram was built in 1920 at the works of the Electric Traction Company in Tividale and operated in Dudley borough. Thirty-ones frames of the same design were constructed at the works and Tram 5 is one of the few that survived.

In the 1970s, it was discovered in a garden in Kates Hill, where it was used as a shed and garden house. Tram 5 underwent conservation work at Llangollen Railway.

Mia enjoys her moment in spotlight

Mia Richards, from Lower Gornal, takes centre stage with former MP Ann Widdecombe

THEATRE star Mia Richards has been riding high on her magic carpet after landing a first professional role in the pantomime Aladdin.

The Black Country actress played Princess Jasmine alongside a cast that also included former Conservative MP Ann Widdecombe at Marina Theatre in Lowestoft.

The panto finished on New Year’s Day after a 22-performance run and received rave reviews. Mia, aged 20, from Lower Gornal, relished her starring role. Her proud father Mark said: “We did a 400 mile round trip with family and friends to see the panto. It was great to see Mia doing what she loves and the show was fabulous.”

After leaving Ellows Hall Sports College, Mia went on to audition and study for a BTEC Level 3 Extended Diploma in Performing Arts at Birmingham Ormiston Academy.

She also studied at Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Arts Educational School in London for a year before securing a place at PPA in Guildford where she is beginning her second year.

Overseas 12-month gift subscriptions are available from: Europe £73.56, rest of the world £110.76 (Includes P&P, Direct Debit or Pre-payment)
Games success could hasten the Metro link

THE £200 million extension of the Midland Metro through Dudley town centre to Brierley Hill could be ready a year earlier than expected in time for the Commonwealth Games in 2022.

Transport bosses revealed they wanted to speed up work on the line, which will be extended from Wednesbury towards Dudley, to take advantage of the sporting competition being held in Birmingham.

Work was due to start in 2019 and the line open to passengers by 2022 but the launch date could now be brought forward.

Discussions have already been held about speeding up the work and further talks are now planned with Transport for West Midlands and the Midlands Metro Alliance.

Dudley Council leader Patrick Harley said: “The announcement that Birmingham is to host the 2022 Commonwealth Games is fantastic news for the whole region. With thousands of extra visitors potentially coming into the region, we recognise that the Games could prove a massive economic boost for Dudley.”

The seven-mile route will run past Dudley Zoo and Castle, into the heart of Dudley town centre and then on to the Waterfront, Merry Hill and into Brierley Hill town centre.

Firms finally start to see benefit of fund

THE first companies are benefitting from a major cash injection for industry from the Midlands Engine Investment Fund (MEIF).

Brierley Hill-based Direct Digital Controls is one of four companies to secure funding. It will enable the 21-strong company to recruit four more staff and train an additional apprentice as it expands its growing wired and lighting controls divisions.

The finance was due to be launched at the start of 2017, alongside a similar scheme for the Northern Powerhouse area. But a string of delays held up the funding. It was finally cleared to start lending in October.

Support the growth of small and medium-sized companies across the Midlands.

Firms are finally starting to see the benefit of a £250m cash injection for the area. But as tringo delays held up the funding, it was finally cleared to start lending in October.

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A headteacher who ‘tricked’ a colleague into bumping up his salary by £19,000 has been banned from teaching for life.

David Bishop-Rowe, former head at The Sutton School and Specialist College in Dudley, took advantage of a colleague’s poor eyesight to get his pay rise signed off.

The increase, which had not been approved by the school's governing body, took his salary up to £110,852.

The 61-year-old was also found to have committed a ‘sustained course of dishonest conduct’, including direct- ing thousands of pounds owed to the school to a company set up by himself.

He has apologised for his ‘unscrepulousness’.

Mr Bishop-Rowe led the school in Scotts Green Close, for pupils with special educational needs, from 2002 until he resigned in 2014 after a whistleblower triggered an investigation.

He has been banned from the profession by the National College for Teaching and Leadership, part of the Department for Education, after admitting a string of allegations.

The panel found Mr Bishop-Rowe had ‘deliberately sought to conceal’ the fact that he had set up a private company, Education Development Consultancy (EDC), where money that should have gone to the school was instead funnelled.

It said that almost £28,000 the school should have received for work he did for the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) was instead redirected to EDC after he added the company’s bank details to invoices without the knowledge of the school.

Former headteacher David Bishop-Rowe has been banned from the profession.

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From Dudley, HAlesowen & Stourbridge

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Jacqueline Standish Nov 2017
Pupils from Ileys Community Centre who took part in the project to learn about traditional skills

More than 20 children from the age of eight, who attend the Ileys Community Centre, learned about chain-making and welding skills by visiting Dudley College’s Advance II centre to see modern technology in action.

Dudley College principal Lowell Williams said: “Their enthusiasm was unsurpassed and they clearly understood the links between past craft skills and how the same products are being made today by advanced technology.

TWO hospital charities have received more than £1.6 million through fundraising, donations and legacies in 12 months.

The money has been used for a variety of projects in Sandwell and Dudley.

The Dudley Group NHS Charity received £246,257 in donations and £17,935 in legacies during the 2016/17 financial year. Fundraising also helped receive £1.6m for hospital charities
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 Care.

Paul knows this all too well, after experiencing this personally. “My own grandfather 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.

1. Care Cost Fees

This is not so as the seven-year rule only applies to Inheritance Tax and not local authority care.

The solution is for couples to simply not leave everything to each other in the first place. Paul continues: “What my grandfather could have done is leave his half of the house in trust to his children, stating that they couldn’t have it while his wife, my grandmother, was still alive. We call these Property Trust Wills. If my grandfather had left his half of the house in trust to the children then when my grandmother subsequently received care in her later life she would have only been means tested on her own half of the house, but my grandfather’s half would have been safe.

Why should he have to contribute his half when he didn’t receive any care?

The important factor is that couples need to act in advance. Once one party dies or loses mental capacity, through a stroke for example, they are no longer in a position to do this legitimate and straightforward type of planning. It is therefore important for couples to act now even if they may not foresee care fees being an issue.”

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.

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

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 your 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!

I’ve experienced this in my own family and I’m sure most people have had similar experiences or heard of someone who has. Bloodline trusts will give greater protection to your children.”

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.”

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.

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 think 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.”
Zoo to spend £460,000 on restoration projects

Plans to spend £460,000 on eight projects have been revealed at Dudley Zoo. The schemes to get under way this year even include a beach.

The innovations include a revamp of the tiger enclosure, a new lion viewing area and a farmyard play area, all set to be completed in 2018.

Dudley Zoo’s chief executive Derek Grove says is part of an ongoing programme of investment at the Castle Hill attraction.

Visitors who add the 10 per cent voluntary donation to their entrance fee have been given the chance to vote for one of three major projects. Currently, the £250,000 project to extend the Sumatran tiger enclosure is the leading option. A beach is also planned for the summer.

Evil killer’s prison term is increased after appeal

By Clare Butler

POLICE have praised the extension of the jail sentence of murderer Aaron Barley who killed a mother and son in their own home in Stourbridge.

Barley was sentenced to life in prison in October with a minimum term of 30 years after admitting to murdering mother and son, Tracey and Pierce Wilkinson, at their home in Greyhound Lane last March.

He also admitted the attempted murder of Peter Wilkinson, Tracey’s husband and Pierce’s father.

After West Midlands Police and the Crown Prosecution Service appealed the sentence, it was ruled that the term was too lenient.

At the Court of Appeal Barley’s term was increased after Solicitor General Robert Buckland argued before Lord Justice Holroyde, Mrs Justice Whipple and Mr Justice Gove that the original sentence was ‘unduly lenient’.

The three judges agreed that the 30-year minimum term was insufficient in ‘this most exceptional and grave case’.

They substituted it with a minimum term of 35 years, less time on remand – amounting to 34 years and 178 days before he can be considered for release on licence.

Mr Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia were in court in March.

The trial judge had decided not to impose a whole-life tariff principally because of Barley’s youth.

Barley will be at least 58 before he is eligible to apply for parole.

Mr Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia were in court in London while Barley watched from prison by video-link.

Barley had armed himself with a kitchen knife when he crept inside the family’s home and stabbed Mrs Wilkinson and her son as they slept in their beds. Mr Wilkinson, who was out walking the dog, was stabbed a number of times on his return and was fortunate to survive. Lydia was away at university at the time.

Barley had been taken in by the family after Mrs Wilkinson saw him sleeping rough in the spring of 2016. They had helped him to find a home and a job and had invited him to spend Christmas Day with them.

Detective Chief Inspector Edward Foster, from the homicide team, was at court for the hearing. He said, “I am pleased that the original sentence was deemed too lenient and I hope this brings further closure to Peter Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia.”

The trial judge had decided not to impose a whole-life tariff principally because of Barley’s youth.

Setback for campaign to save industrialist’s former home

A CAMPAIGN to save the former home of the man credited with bringing chairmaking to the Black Country looks to have been lost.

Dudley Council planners have recommended the home in Cradley, once owned by industrialist Noah Hingley, be demolished. The bid will be decided at a planning committee meeting next week.

The Victorian Society and Save Britain’s Heritage have pleaded with Dudley Council not to allow the demolition of Hatherton Lodge. ‘The property is in a poor condition, and developer Cornbow Properties wants to build seven homes on the site.

Mr Hingley, whose Netherton ironworks N Hingley & Sons made the anchor for the ill-fated liner The Titanic, lived at the property on Drews Holloway during the 19th century. A campaign to save the Victorian house was launched by heritage campaigners. Nearly 100 objections were lodged and more than 250 backed an online campaign to save the building.

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Convincing

The planning committee meeting is being held next Tuesday (January 9). Officers said the applicant had provided ‘clear and convincing justification for the loss of Hatherton Lodge’.

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By Clare Butler

POLICE have praised the extension of the jail sentence of murderer Aaron Barley who killed a mother and son in their own home in Stourbridge.

Barley was sentenced to life in prison in October with a minimum term of 30 years after admitting to murdering mother and son, Tracey and Pierce Wilkinson, at their home in Greyhound Lane last March.

He also admitted the attempted murder of Peter Wilkinson, Tracey’s husband and Pierce’s father.

After West Midlands Police and the Crown Prosecution Service appealed the sentence, it was ruled that the term was too lenient.

At the Court of Appeal Barley’s term was increased after Solicitor General Robert Buckland argued before Lord Justice Holroyde, Mrs Justice Whipple and Mr Justice Gove that the original sentence was ‘unduly lenient’.

The three judges agreed that the 30-year minimum term was insufficient in ‘this most exceptional and grave case’.

They substituted it with a minimum term of 35 years, less time on remand – amounting to 34 years and 178 days before he can be considered for release on licence. It means Barley will be at least 58 before he is eligible to apply for parole.

Mr Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia were in court in March.

The trial judge had decided not to impose a whole-life tariff principally because of Barley’s youth.

Barley will be at least 58 before he is eligible to apply for parole.

Mr Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia were in court in London while Barley watched from prison by video-link.

Barley had armed himself with a kitchen knife when he crept inside the family’s home and stabbed Mrs Wilkinson and her son as they slept in their beds. Mr Wilkinson, who was out walking the dog, was stabbed a number of times on his return and was fortunate to survive. Lydia was away at university at the time.

Barley had been taken in by the family after Mrs Wilkinson saw him sleeping rough in the spring of 2016. They had helped him to find a home and a job and had invited him to spend Christmas Day with them.

Detective Chief Inspector Edward Foster, from the homicide team, was at court for the hearing. He said, “I am pleased that the original sentence was deemed too lenient and I hope this brings further closure to Peter Wilkinson and his daughter Lydia.”

The trial judge had decided not to impose a whole-life tariff principally because of Barley’s youth.

Setback for campaign to save industrialist’s former home

A CAMPAIGN to save the former home of the man credited with bringing chairmaking to the Black Country looks to have been lost.

Dudley Council planners have recommended the home in Cradley, once owned by industrialist Noah Hingley, be demolished. The bid will be decided at a planning committee meeting next week.

The Victorian Society and Save Britain’s Heritage have pleaded with Dudley Council not to allow the demolition of Hatherton Lodge. ‘The property is in a poor condition, and developer Cornbow Properties wants to build seven homes on the site.

Mr Hingley, whose Netherton ironworks N Hingley & Sons made the anchor for the ill-fated liner The Titanic, lived at the property on Drews Holloway during the 19th century. A campaign to save the Victorian house was launched by heritage campaigners. Nearly 100 objections were lodged and more than 250 backed an online campaign to save the building.

Convincing

The planning committee meeting is being held next Tuesday (January 9). Officers said the applicant had provided ‘clear and convincing justification for the loss of Hatherton Lodge’.
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Jules and Hayden have recently taken over The Olde Queens Head and it’s been going from strength to strength since.

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The simple life for Scott's new sound

Wolverhampton's Ivor Novello Award-winning singer Scott Matthews is planning a busy 2018 with the release of his new album, The Great Untold.

The singer/songwriter plans to release the album in April with a tour following in May. It will include a date at Birmingham's St Paul's Church on May 20.

The record is Scott's simplest to date. For the first time in his five-year career, there's no band, no lavash production – just Scott. It is a man, a guitar and a song. And it sounds simple, doesn't it? And it is.

Scott's new record, The Great Untold, is a career defining masterpiece. The sixth studio album by the Ivor Novello award-winning singer-songwriter is the one that many have craved: it is a masterclass in honesty, instinct and collection.

A largely acoustic recording, Scott’s sublime new record features sparse production. Recorded at home and in acoustically resonant rural church instrumentation has been jettisoned. His 10-song cycle is the sound of a comfortable in his own skin, putting his neck on the line with a collection of otherworldly songs.

It sounds still working on it but it’s coming together and the songs are there. The record will be out in spring. I’ve always wanted to record a striped, stripped back record and finally the time felt right to do that.

The ghosts of Paul Simon, Tim Buckley, Nick Drake and John Martyn loom large on a collection that ranks alongside work by some of the world’s great singer-songwriters. On his sixth record, Scott has created songs that are breathtaking in their beauty and audacious in their simplicity.

The absence of drums, bass, cello and flute on The Great Untold, however, should not infer that it lacks depth. Far from it. The richness in Scott’s new work comes from subtle playing and mellifluous melodies. He has described it as a “complete album” and the last record. The plan to write an acoustic record has always been there. It akea while

The first great arc of his career was completed with his Home duology; a stunning pair of records that reflected on his journey thus far. The Great Untold is the sound of a man moving on. Scott is recently married, soon to experience fatherhood and has new hopes and fears, new stories to tell.

“Things have changed a lot. Back in the day there was the big record label, the management deal and all sorts of people around us. Those days it’s just my wife and I: we make the decisions, I write the songs, we take it on the road. I kind of like doing things that way. It gives us more artistic control. It’s been a steep learning curve but there’s a lot to be said for keeping things simple.”

“Keeping things simple is precisely what The Great Untold does. And with his demos for the record now complete, it’s shaping up to be the greatest record of his career.

ANDY RICHARDSON

Scott Matthews is running a Pledge campaign for people who want to pre-order copies of The Great Untold and further details are available at www.scottmatthews.uk

For more entertainment news and reviews see The Ticket in your Express & Star every Friday.
Busy start to the new year of gigs

Now the festivities are over, the streamers and emblems have been dismantled away at the region’s venues and it’s time to look forward to some of the best gigs coming up early in 2018. The mega venues boast the biggest names with Paramore at the Genting Arena on January 14 and Lady Gaga (pictured with her rescheduled four calling in at the NEC venue on February 1, the day after her Arena Birmingham gig.

Then the Genting has Kendrick Lamar on February 9, The Script (15th), Imagine Dragons (24th), Morrissey (27th) and pride of Wales the Stereophonics on St David’s Day, March 1. What happens at Birmingham O2 Arena includes festival favourites The Hunna on Thursday (January 11), Hollywood rockers Black Veil Brides co-headline with York’s Asking Alexandria on January 23, punk veterans The Damned visit on February 1, then 80s icons Duran Duran play on February 11. Other February gigs to watch out for at the Academy include Texas pup Rogers Bowling For Soup (13th), Slam Dunk regulars Don Broco (15th) and Scottish indie rock legends Franz Ferdinand back with a new album (20th).

Across the city in Digbeth, things start to get interesting at the O2 Institute on February 1 with tipped-for-the-top Reading rockers The Amazons. American punk veterans The Dead Boys mark 40 years since their debut on February 2 and highly rated young American rockers Highly Suspect play on the same night in the venue’s larger room. Expect some Sheffield steel on February 6 when up-and-coming metal monsters When She Sleeps roar into action.

Grammy nominated LA R&B singer-songwriter Jhené Aiko is at the Institute on February 8 and California rockers Alice Ant Farm are in action on February 12. The voice of Mike & The Mechanics and Ace, Paul Carrack, has two concerts at Symphony Hall on Birmingham on February 3 and 18. Aussie star singer Natalie Imbruglia is at Birmingham Hall on February 5 and country pop legends The Mavericks will dance the night away at Symphony Hall on February 8.

Highlights at the Hare and Hounds in Kings Heath include ex-Special Roddy Radial with his Skibelly Rebels on January 19 and the following night it’s garage rockers The Surfing Magazines (featuring ex-members of The Wave Pictures and Slow Club).

Craig Charles opens his trunk of funk, Djing at the Hare & Hound on the 19th. Reggae star General Levy visits on January 27 then there are two nights of psychedelic rock with noisy LA outfit Ward (29th) and San Francisco’s Moon Duo (30th). Things will get pretty cosmic too at the Robin 2 in Bilston on Sunday when the latest version of Space Ritual, featuring founder members of Hawkwind Nik Turner and Terry Ollis, beam down for a space rock celebration.

Also coming up at Mount Pleasant venue is the 30th anniversary performance of rock opera Operation Mindcrime by Geoff Tate on January 17 and British blues rocker Asylum Buster on the 18th.

JUMP n jive with King Pleasure & The Biscuit Boys on January 25, and good time rock n rollers The Quireboys deliver an acoustic set at the Robin on January 28.

Final few recommendations: Watch out for Mobo-winning singer Zara MS and The Hare and Hounds on February 7; the return of Everything Everything after their A Fever Dream album with a gig at the O2 Academy on March 3; and a rare UK outing for American roots outfit Pokey Lafarge at the O2 Institute on March 7.

The Best of Everything Everything after their A Fever Dream album with a gig at the O2 Academy on March 3; and a rare UK outing for American roots outfit Pokey Lafarge at the O2 Institute on March 7.
4.00 Pointless Celebrities.
6.00 And They’re Off for Sport Relief.
7.00 The Wonder of Animals. (R) Football.
8.00 Scrambled!: The Tom Parker Bunch.
12.00 The Big Soup Dash: Coronation Street in the Evening. 1.00 & 12.00 The Night Right Prank Projects – who is Simon Cowell? 1.15 has been released for a new series on ITV at 8.30. (R)
1.15 Film: The Murmurs. (R) 10.45 Film: The Mummy. (R) 10.30 and 11.30 Five films.
1.45 Film: Host. Transylvania (2012)
2.05 Film: The Nanny. (R) 2.10 Film: The Hundred-Foot Journey. (R)
4.20 Film: The Vietnam War.
6.00 i-ppv (2018).
7.00 2008.
9.00 Film: The Hunger Games: Catching Fire. (2013)
11.10 Film: The Little Prince.
12.00 Film: Life on the Road.
1.00 Film: The Hunger Games: Mockingjay. Part 2. (2015)
5.00 Film: The Hunger Games: Catching Fire. (2013)
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BBC2
6.20 Channel 4 News. (R) 6.30 The Instant Gardener. (R) 6.45 GB News. (R) 7.00 Channel 4 News. (R) 7.20 The Instant Gardener. (R) 7.30 University Challenge. (R) 8.00 The Real Ale. (R) 8.30 University Challenge. (R) 9.00 The Ethical Consumer. (R) 9.30 The Andrew Marr Show. (R) 10.00 The Big Questions. (R) 11.00 Homes Under the Hammer. (R) 12.00 Antiques Roadshow. (R) 12.30 The One Show. (R)

ITV
5.15 The One Show. (R) 5.30 Britain's Got Talent. (R) 5.45 Watchdog. (R) 6.00 ITV News. (R) 6.15 SAS: Who Dares Wins. (R) 6.30 The Doctors. (R) 6.45 Exclusive: The Prime Minister. (R) 7.00 The King of Queens. (R) 7.15 The Tonight Show. (R) 7.30 The King of Queens. (R) 7.45 Extraordinary Lives. (R) 8.00 The Myths of History. (R) 8.15 Financial Focus. (R) 8.30 The Drop. (R) 8.45 Crime Watch. (R) 9.00 The Drop. (R) 9.15 Crime Watch. (R) 9.30 The Andrew Marr Show. (R) 10.00 The Big Questions. (R) 11.00 Homes Under the Hammer. (R) 12.00 Antiques Roadshow. (R)

CHANNEL 4
11.05 Trouble with the Cat. (R) 11.20 University Challenge. (R) 11.45 The Big Questions. (R) 12.00 Film: The Sweeney. (R) 1.00 Channel 4 News. (R) 1.15 The Andrew Marr Show. (R) 1.30 The Big Questions. (R) 1.45 Comedians. (R)

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The boys are back in town for a thrilling new series

When IVT launched the action drama series Lethal Weapon last year, a lot of viewers were sceptical about its chances of success. For a start, it’s rare for US series to be shown on the channel in prime-time – even the acclaimed The Americans struggled in the ratings and was eventually moved to ITV.

And then there’s the fact that Lethal Weapon is based on a hugely successful movie franchise which would’ve been a tough act to follow. Riggs and Murtaugh were played by none other than Mel Gibson and Danny Glover.

It seems even actor Claye Crawford, who plays the Gibson role of bone cancer Riggs, didn’t expect audiences to share his enthusiasm for the show.

He told Collider: “I read the script on a plane and I had that moment of being a 12-year-old boy, just wanting to play cowboys and superheroes. I was like, ‘This is a cowboy superhero?’ I called my wife and said, ‘Look, I think I’m gonna say yes, but there’s no way it will make it past three episodes.’”

Luckily, he was proved wrong. Not only that, but the revamped Lethal Weapon has been extended by a further 13 episodes – meaning not only is there a second season, but it’s more back on ITV.

For anyone who missed the first series (or the film that inspired it), it follows the on-the-run duo of Riggs, a reckless former Navy SEAL, who moved to LA following the deaths of his wife Miranda and their unborn child, and Murtaugh (Damon Wayans), a steady family man who returned to the force following a heart attack.

The previous run ended with Murtaugh discovering just how far Riggs was prepared to go in pursuit of his wife’s killer. In this opening episode, Riggs is in Mexico, where he plans to avenge Miranda’s death and finish off Tito Flores (Danny Mora) once and for all – but the cop’s loyal partner is on his trail.

Once the duo are back in the US, they face some tough questions due to the ongoing investigation into Flores’ activities, and Murtaugh’s family also have a few points they’d like to get cleared up.

Meanwhile, Captain Avery (Kevin Rahm) is questioned by Internal Affairs about the integrity of his department, but if the Miranda storyline does get wrapped up, can we expect a salrier, more responsible Riggs in the rest of season 2?

It seems not, as Crawford says that the forthcoming episodes will reveal that some of his character’s problems predate the tragic loss of his family. Speaking to Collider, he said: “The beauty of TV is that you have 22 hours to tell a story, so we’re gonna really find out who Riggs is and who he was before, and go into his childhood to see that I started out bad.

“I don’t think we ever want Riggs healthy. The more Riggs is a mess, the more the fun it is.”

**MONDAY**

**Silent Witness**

**BBC1, 8pm**

New series. Part one of two. Nikki struggles to come to terms with her back home and makes out fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan for support, only to learn she is in the frame for new crime. National Crime Agency investigator Guy Barnhardt asks Nikki to help him identify the grieving pathologist David Cannon, the chief suspect in Sally’s disappearance.

Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked. Meanwhile, a body found in a reservoir is linked to murder 16 years previously. Rigg’s fellow pathologist Sally Vaughan is shocked.

**TUESDAY**

**Working Class White Men**

**Channel 4, 10pm**

The first of a two-part documentary in which Professor Green finds out what life is like for working-class men in different parts of the country. The boy begins by meeting Lewis, who has his heart set on going to Cambridge University but is up against a culture of low expectations. Essex boy Denzi, an aspiring entrepreneur with a mixture of money-making schemes on the go, and unemployed David, who currently lives in a homeless hostel in Bolton and is on the verge of becoming involved in far-right politics.

**WEDNESDAY**

**Kiri**

**Channel 4, 9pm**

Two Ratha warring – Jack Thorne, the writer behind National Treasure, and actress Sarah Lancashire, who picked up awards for Happy Valley and Last Tango in Halifax – team up for this highly anticipated new drama. Lancashire stars as Miriam, a no-nonsense social worker who makes an instinctive approach to protecting the children in her care. But a question arises when she arranges for Kiri, a black girl who is about to be adopted by her white foster family, to have an unannounced visit with her biological grandparents, only for the younger to then disappear. The police, the press and even her colleagues seem to blame Miriam, but as the media spotlight intensifies, both sets of relatives also face some difficult questions.

**THURSDAY**

**Big Brother**

**BBC1, 8pm**

We are in a golden age of natural world television. However, of all the rare and fascinating creatures that have been caught on camera of late, there is still one group of animals that enthral us more than any other - the big cats. They are the planet’s top predators, yet even in this remarkable animal family, some members stand out. The African lion, for example, is the only wild cat that lives in large family groups, and in Ruaha, Tanzania, we see how they form huge ‘super prides’ in order to hunt. There is also revealing footage of a tiny rusty spotted cat in Sri Lanka, a lynx living in the bitterly cold winter in Canada, an African leopard raising her cub, and perhaps the world’s most lonesome cat, the snow leopard, searching for a mate in the Himalayas.

**FRIDAY**

**The Wine Show**

**Channel 5, 7pm**

New series. Actors Matthew Goode and James Purefoy travel to the south of France to find wines to accompany a six-course lunch chosen by Michelin-starred chef Stephane Reynaud.

**SATURDAY**

**National Treasure**

**Channel 4, 9pm**

A massive documentary series about the unrivalled treasure trove of wildlife footage from the Blue Planet II series. From wristbands, world-renowned plastic surgeon Christopher Ingelfeld, tonight we meet 20-year-old Lucias, who was born a girl but has been living as a man for two years. He arrives at the clinic with his mum Karen, for a consultation about having his breasts removed. Railway worker, 43, is also about to undergo her gender confirmation surgery at the clinic. After coming down the days for thirty years, Wendy is determined to have the female body that she felt should have been hers at birth and to have her male genitals removed.
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Why carvery did not pack a Punch

THE staff were brilliant. The chef at the carvery was cracking jokes about venison and Bambi.

Your Chronicle

The Punch Bowl Inn, at Bridgnorth, offers a multi-award-winning AGA Carvery, decent value for money and delightful local ales. It’s steeped in tradition, serves quality traditional food and drink and has been recognised by the local CAMRA branch for real ale.

And while it offers function rooms, a venue for weddings, guest rooms, a la carte menus and more, it’s best known for its Sunday lunches.

Sensible

Try calling on a Sunday morning and you’re likely to be told: ‘Sorry, we’re full’. I know. I’ve tried. This time I took the sensible option and booked well in advance.

When my friend and I arrived for a Sunday service, a queue had formed outside shortly before the venue’s 12 noon opening. On a cool, crisp winter’s morning, they hovered near to the Punch Bowl’s garden, which provides magnificent views across the countryside.

As the clock struck 12, a click of the latch signalled the start of service and the early bird arrivals shuffled inside. All of which meant the bar resembled the check-in desk for a Ryanair flight to Alicante during mid-Summer.

Lunch at the Punch Bowl isn’t quite a bun fight. It’s far too civilised for that. But there’s something curious about going out to eat then forming an orderly queue, like Soviet-era Russians waiting for bread. The serving area is a vast, heated pass, behind which stands an AGA. Vast joints of roasted meat waiting for customers while large bowls of vegetables and sides offer further sustenance. Our options were beef, turkey, pork, ham and venison, sliced by a cheerful chef with Shropshire’s sharpest knife – and tongue. When my friend asked for venison, he quipped: “Nice, eating a bit of Bambi, are we?” Boom. Boom.

He garnished my plate with a slice of beef, a tender piece of sweet, pink ham and a less-than-impressive piece of pork, which was much too fatty. And then we strolled past the Punch Bowl serving bowls, garnishing our plates with roast potatoes, parsnips, peas, carrots, garlic potatoes, Yorkshire puddings and more. The roast potatoes were good, though they’d lost a little of their crunch by standing on the pass. The parsnips were a treat, nicely caramelised and pleasingly sweet. The peas and carrots were a little too watery but the garlicky potatoes and cauliflower cheese were great. The Yorkshire puddings were nicely risen while a range of sauces – cranberry, apple, gravy at al – were suited to all-comers.

But it wasn’t as enjoyable as it ought to have been. The gravy didn’t pack a punch. The apple sauce wasn’t particularly sharp. And though the garlic potatoes and cauliflower cheese were pleasant, other bits were bland.

The biggest problem was that the food – with the exception of the meat – was lukewarm, not piping hot, and lost a little along the way.

We skipped desserts. We felt like we’d been the participants in some form of Food Olympics and there was insufficient room for a round of sweetened carbs.

And as the other guests continued to tuck into their carvery dinners while the staff prepared for the 2pm sitting, we made our exit.

ANDY RICHARDSON

Your Chronicle

London Theatre Break

3 Days Self-Drive - Evening Show

Departing Friday 26 Jan

Price Includes...

✓ 2 nights B&B at the Ibis Shepherd’s Bush Hotel, London
✓ Dreamgirls theatre ticket – Upper Circle (evening performance)
✓ Free time in London

3 Days Self-Drive only £189

Kinky Boots

Faced with bankruptcy due to competition from foreign sources, one small village’s shoe factory owner embarks on a daringly different business strategy, ladies’ shoes in men’s sizes for the drag queen and cross-dresser market.

This true story, which in 2005 was released as a successful film, is the tale of W.J. Brooks Ltd of Earl Barton, Northampton, and its startling move into fetish footwear under the “Divine” brand.

With an original score by Cyndi Lauper, this story then became a multiple Tony-award winning Broadway show, later crossing the Atlantic to London’s Adelphi Theatre.

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Dreamgirls

Dreamgirls

Inspired by the true story of Diana Ross and The Supremes, this Tony award-winning musical directed and choreographed by Casey Nicholaw (The Book of Mormon, Aladin, Something Rotten) tells the story of “The Dreams”, a young female singing trio from Chicago, who have to learn the hard way that the road to stardom has a lot of deep holes and deadly traps.

Songs include And I'm Telling You I'm Not Going, Listen, Knock Knock, Only and I Am Changing.

Enjoy this fantastic production at the Savoy Theatre now!

London Theatre Break

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Modern purpose-built apartment in a convenient location for town centre on sale with no chain

A modern purpose-built apartment in a convenient location for Halesowen town centre, this two-bedroomed property is also within easy travelling distance of the motorway network.

It is for sale through Hicks Hadley at £99,000 with no chain.

The property’s accommodation briefly comprises of a lounge, fitted kitchen, a master bedroom with a balcony, a second bedroom and a bathroom. The property also benefits from allocated parking and communal grounds.

In more detail the communal entrance hall has an intercom entry system. The lounge has a feature fireplace with a fitted fire and laminate flooring.

The kitchen is fitted with wall and base units with work surfaces over, a single drainer sink, an integrated electric oven and hob with extractor over and plumbing for a washing machine. Bedroom one has a patio doors leading out to the balcony, while bedroom two has a storage cupboard.

The bathroom has a bath with a shower over.

Contact Hicks Hadley on 0121 585 6667 or visit www.hickshadley.com

Four-double bedroomed detached residence is in a secluded position and close to village amenities

In a secluded position, well placed for sought after schools and village shops, restaurants and amenities, this four-double bedroomed detached residence is for sale through Taylor’s at £465,000.

The property is set back beyond the generous driveway with a double garage and has a private level rear garden. A position and setting which certainly enhances, it has an exceptionally spacious and very well-proportioned layout of

KINGSWINFORD
£465,000

well planned accommodation all of which is beautifully presented and well appointed throughout.

This briefly comprises of an imposing reception hall with an oak floor which has doors opening to the principal ground floor accommodation, including the WC, a huge sitting room with a conservatory off, a formal dining room and the family dining kitchen with appliances which has a further conservatory off.

From the galleried-style landing are the four double bedrooms, the master bedroom having a refitted en-suite shower room and there is a refitted luxury house bathroom.

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- Applicants should possess a high level of all round maintenance ability along with excellent problem solving and time management skills.

- Reporting to the Site Manager, you will have day to day responsibility for security of premises, maintenance (internal/external), compliance, facility management and the general operational requirements of school and related Trust activities.

- You must have a full driving licence and be willing to work flexibly. You will be a key holder and required to participate in emergency on-call duties. You will form part of a rotational, 4 way working shift pattern operating between 5.15am - 9.30pm to include sequenced Saturday working and the potential for rotational Sunday facility lifting cover (paid at an additional premium).

- For an application pack and full details of the role please visit our website:
  - www.windsor.windsoracademytrust.org.uk
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  - 0121 550 1452

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  - or contact Sue Cooper, Personnel Officer
  - 0121 550 1452

- Closing date for applications:
  - Tuesday 16th January 2018 at 12.30 pm

- Windsor High School and Sixth Form is committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and expects all staff and volunteers to share this commitment.

- This post is subject to an enhanced DBS.

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Ford scapppage extended and Fiesta leads market

UK market leader Ford announces the extension of its successful scrappage scheme as Ford CV sales and share increase in November’s CV market and sales of the all-new Fiesta reinforce its leadership of the market.

According to the official November sales figures from the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT):

- Ford is the UK market leader in total vehicle, car and CV sales
- Fiesta is UK best-seller; Transit Custom first in CV and sixth in total vehicle charts
- Transit range is second in UK total vehicle sales
- Ford has five models in the UK Top 20 – Fiesta (1st), Focus (4th), Transit Custom (6th), Kuga (12th) and Transit (20th)

The Ford scrappage scheme, which includes cars and CVs, has been extended into the first quarter of 2018. The success of the scheme, which has seen over 10,500 vehicles scrapped and replaced with cleaner, more fuel efficient vehicles, is expanded to include the Ford Ranger as well as the most popular all-new Fiesta, Focus and Transit CV models.

Andy Barratt, Ford of Britain chairman and managing director, said: “The Ford scrappage scheme has been so well received by our customers and I’m pleased to announce its extension in to next year.”

“We have an excellent product line-up and our scheme is applicable to one of the broadest ranges of vehicles, including the segment leading Ford Ranger. We continue to carry strong sales momentum as we more towards the end of the year. “Our CV sales growth was particularly positive in an increasingly challenging market. “It’s also rewarding to see the all-new Fiesta strengthening its leadership position as we continue the launch of the full model range, with Fiesta Active and ST, Kiwa’s 12th and Transit (20th).

The official figures released by the SMMT show that total car sales in November were down 11.2 per cent to 163,541 units, compared with November 2016. For the year to date (end November) UK car sales were 2,338,144, down five per cent compared with the same period in 2016.

Ford car sales for this period were 271,855, some 78,738 registrations ahead of its nearest rival.

Ford is the clear leader in retail car sales, which most accurately reflect the preferences of private buyers. At 11.7 per cent, Ford’s November retail car sales share was 3.9 percentage points ahead of its nearest rival, and for the year to date, Ford’s retail car sales share was 11.7 per cent.

P

Ford’s scrappage scheme now extends to the Ford Ranger
**No signs of flagging from the men in black**

**SPORTING FEATURE**

By Nick Elwell

“I have been refereeing for 20 years and I really enjoy it. It gets me out and it still gives me that buzz.”

When I make the appointments, I just look at whether they can handle the Sky TV cameras. All three of them are experienced refs who know how to handle players. And they did a good job, just don’t remind me about Bill’s white boots! All of them are refereeing this season with Bill likely to clock up a century of games during the course of the campaign.

And the Pendeford-based former publican has no plans to call time on his refereeing days anytime soon. “I have been refereeing for 20 years and I really enjoy it. It gets me out and it still gives me that buzz. I love the banter because that’s the sort of player I am,” added Bill. “I will carry on as long as the old knees keep up with play.”

**Rider in support plea as he pursues dream**

BY NICK EWELL

A CYCLIST from the Black Country is aiming to get to the top of his sport as he pursues dream of professional racing, having run various youth teams from Bushbury youth club for over 40 years.

Liam Lewis said: “I will be racing throughout Europe in some of the most prestigious races in France, Belgium and Luxembourg from February, but he must pay for himself. It means he will be competing in professional races in France, Belgium and Luxembourg from February, but he must pay for himself. There is a lack of respect towards referees these days. You get the manager on the touchline having a go and that filters through to the players. You have to have a word with them but I haven’t got a card out for ages. I prefer to talk to players, it’s all about man management. Anyone can get a card out.”

**Former team-mate Andre Gray led the tributes after Connor Goldson made an emotional Premier League debut for Brighton & Hove Albion.**

Wolverhampton-born Goldson was named man of the match in the December 23 clash, after shutting out Watford on his top-flight bow – 10 months after being withdrawn from action to combat an age-related problem.

And though Goldson’s performance saw him start two goals to the season, Grey could not hide his delight on social media.

Posting a picture of the duo contesting for possession, on Twitter, Grey wrote: “From Sunday League Deansfield young boys to the Premier league, against all odds, we did what no-one could have dreamed of... not even us I don’t think!!”

When people dream, they dream of big things. This is a dream come true for him and his family. He has played for Oxford and Rushden & Diamonds. He used to run football and then stopped to raise his son, Billy, played professionally as a goalkeeper for Northampton Town, Oxford and Rushden & Diamonds.

**Premier debut is a Goldson gift**

**Rider in support plea as he pursues dream**

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Applause in honour of ex-keeper

A MINUTE’S applause was held before Stourbridge FC’s fixture against Rashall Old Town to mark the 16th anniversary of former keeper Derek Dudley, which resulted in a point for both teams.

Mr Dudley, a former member of their first team, died on New Year’s Day.

Mr Dudley, 47, also used to play for Halesowen Town and Chasetown.

On the field, Stourbridge saw off the visiting team to claim a 1-0 win with a goal from substitute Josh Cooke.

Benbow’s long-awaited 100th club goal salvo.

Dodd and sub Luke Shearer completed the rout.

ON Thursday, Stourbridge put a stop to their recent slide down the table by sinking struggling Marine with a four-goal salvo.

Glassboys struck through Darryl Bishop in the first half and added three more in the second. The visitors featured Pablo Hernandez, who was shown a straight red card for a foul. The visitors, featuring Pablo Hernandez, were reduced to nine men but held on to claim a point in a disappointing Boxing Day fixture at The Hawthorns.

The Yeltz pulled a goal back in the 36th minute with John McAtee breaking away and crossing for Enock Ekongo to hit a low shot underneath Hardy completing a hat-trick in the first half with a delightful finish.

Lakeside were set to test himself at a higher level after Kelvin Tatum relinquished the role due to other commitments.

It is a big step for the 30-year-old, who has enjoyed remarkable success with the Heavens in the National League but has now set to test himself at a higher level with the Essex-based outfit.

And he said he could not wait to get started at the Arena-Esses Railway.

“IT’s a great privilege to be asked by Lakeside to manage their team, so it’s something I’m really looking forward to,” Pottinger said.

“I helped Lakeside out on three occasions last season, managing them when Kelvin Tatum was unavailable, and I obviously made an impression which has led to this opportunity.

“I’m so looking forward to take on a job in the Championship, and although it’s going to be a challenge I’d like to think I’m ready for it.

“Lakeside have put a very strong side together, and I’ve dealt most of the riders at some time or another.

“I imagine there won’t be too much bedding in time for me which is good, and I’m looking forward to getting started.”

Proudlock wins the battle of ex-Wolves

TWO former Wolves strikers went head-to-head in the daggers – and Adam Proudlock got the better of Lee Mills.

Newport Town, managed by Proudlock, kept up their title charge in West Midlands League Division One on Saturday, where a 3-1 win at Team Dudley, where Mills in homes.

Mills spent three years at Molines, from 1992 until 1995, while Proudlock came through the youth ranks and figured for them between 1998 and 2003.

Second-half goals from Rob Mawton, who was then sent off, Jay Russell, who scored twice, and Ed James saw Newport to victory.

STOURBRIDGE Chess Club have played their last two matches of 2017.

In Birmingham division 4 the second team were at home to Walsall Kippings. Martin Berridge scored on board three and Jeremy Humphries followed up on board five.

On board 4, Richard Wilkinson was soon a pawn up against Doreen Anderson which eventually became a full piece and Doreen resigned when about to lose more material.

On board 6, Celin Woodall brought home a point and John Foxall won on board one. Finally, Eric Horwill and his opponent agreed a draw at a thumping 4-5-1.5 win for Stourbridge, who should finish in the top half of the division if they continue to play like this.

The first team played away at Kidderminster in a rearranged Worcester and District Division 1 fixture. On board 2, team captain Paul Sharratt had the better of his game and was a pawn up and in the better position in the middle game, but failed to sustain the advantage and settled for the draw. On board 3, JulieWilson won a pawn and exchanged queens early on but also ended in a draw.

Sam Bradley played soundly throughout and accepted the draw with Stourbridge ahead on board one, where Zhi Kezicki lost his game and the match. This is the first time Stourbridge have played in this league and was an excellent start.

Anyone interested in joining Stourbridge chess club should contact Dave Scriven on 01584 423642 or visit www.stourbridgechess.f1.co.uk.

Football officials are showing age red card

VAWM

Sutton Coldfield Town 0
Halesowen 1

HALESOWEN began the new year with a vital away win at relegation rivals.

Jordan Goddard grabbed the only goal of the game for a battling Yeltz side on New Year’s Day.

But it could have been a more decisive success, with Buxton forced to defend for most of the game.

Ethan Jones shot just wide for the visitors on just four minutes. Then Exodus Geohagan saw a header from a corner saved on 12 minutes.

Halesowen looked in control and the pattern continued in the second half. Goddard had a great chance on 54 minutes but shot over.

But he made no mistake a minute later when he fired into the top corner to give Halesowen three valuable points.

Death of boxing referee aged 76

ONE of the world’s top boxing referees, who hailed from the Black Country, has died aged 76.

Paul Thomas, born in Brierley Hill, had kept order in almost 300 world title fights. He also officiated thousands of fights in the West Midlands as a judge.

Mr Thomas, who moved from Newport to Milton Keynes in 2008 after Kelvin Tatum relinquished the role due to other commitments.

It is a big step for the 30-year-old, who has enjoyed remarkable success with the Heavens in the National League but has now set to test himself at a higher level with the Essex-based outfit.

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The Chronicle, a Midland News Association publication, permyitted the company at Ketley, Telford.

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