

# Birkdale

A Community Magazine

# BUZZ



**Sponsored by Birkdale Community Hub and Library  
at the Station Master's House**

**Find out what's going on at the Library and around Birkdale  
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The Junior Chess Club is free to join and is proving to be very successful. The two volunteers, Yvonne and Charlie (who is at Birkdale High School) have welcomed chess players, from total novices to experienced players over a range of ages, starting at age six.



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Contact us on: **01704 566 992** for more details

## Want to advertise in the Birkdale Buzz?

The magazine comes out every quarter (March, June, September and December) and is printed in A5 format. Adverts can be printed either in B&W or full colour.

The charge for adverts in the next edition in **September** is:

**B&W adverts:** 1/8 page costs £15, 1/4 page costs £25, 1/2 page costs £50

**Colour adverts:** 1/8 page costs £20, 1/4 page costs £35, 1/2 page costs £70

We also offer a discount for placing an advert in four editions: four adverts for the price of three. The deadline date for the **September** edition is **13th July**

For further information and advice please email us at:

**birkdalebuzz@thestationmastershouse.co.uk**

## Hello Readers

Welcome to the June edition of the Birkdale Buzz, produced quarterly by volunteers at the Birkdale Community Library charity. We produce the magazine to help keep locals in touch with people and events around Birkdale and provide an interesting read on all sorts of topics. We distribute copies to over 3000 homes in the Birkdale area.

Birkdale Library is situated in the Station Master's House next to the station where, besides the library, there is a computer suite and two meeting rooms for hire (for details of room hire costs, email [roombookings@thestationmastershouse.co.uk](mailto:roombookings@thestationmastershouse.co.uk)). The charity also runs a branch library at the Liverpool Road Methodist Church.

Membership of the library is free, and all our facilities are free for members to use. We organise frequent social events, so why not pop into the library or visit our website at [www.thestationmastershouse.co.uk](http://www.thestationmastershouse.co.uk) for more details?

**Phil Margham** (Editor)

To access an online version of the Birkdale Buzz please go to:

<https://thestationmastershouse.co.uk/birkdale-buzz/>



### Drop-in Community Police Advice Surgeries

Luke Holden, an officer from Merseyside Police, or another officer if he is away, holds regular drop-in community police advice sessions at the Station Master's House. The surgery offers local residents the opportunity to meet the officer to discuss and receive advice on any local or neighbourhood issues and concerns. You can also seek advice on security and crime prevention measures and get guidance if you are worried about any approaches you've had that you think may be a scam.

The surgery takes place at the library every three weeks on Tuesday evenings from 5.00pm to 7.00pm. As this is a drop-in service, no appointment is needed. Please contact the Station Master's House (tel: **01704 566 992**) for the next surgery dates.

### What's On in Southport

**Desperate Scousewives (11 June) The Atkinson**

**Open Golf Championship (16-19 July) Royal Birkdale Golf Club**

**The Sound of Springsteen (23 July) The Atkinson**

**Southport Flower Show (20-23 August) Victoria Park**

**Seussical The Musical (27-29 August) Little Theatre Southport SDC Youth Production**

**Southport Air Show (29-30 August)**

**Yacht Race—24 hours (12-13 September) Marine Lake**

**Russell Watson—An intimate evening with 'The Voice' (24 September) The Atkinson**

**British Firework Championship (26-27 September) Victoria Park**



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By W.S. GILBERT & ARTHUR SULLIVAN



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## Gardeners' Corner

My name is Wendy and I'm a volunteer at Birkdale Community Library. I love gardening and hope you do too.

As we are a library, and 2026 is the National Year of Reading, I thought it appropriate to ask: do you have a reading area in your garden or on your balcony where you can relax with a good book? I hope so, but if not, we have two outside spaces at the Station Master's House for you to enjoy.

The beautiful sunny front garden has an attractive reading bench, and to the rear of the library The Sidings is an outside area with comfortable seating where you can relax, perhaps with a good book from the library. The Sidings can be accessed by walking through the library or is fully accessible via the carpark for those with wheelchairs and buggies.

### June is upon us and it's all systems go in the garden.

Before those plants go into overdrive, pop in the supports they need to thrive:-

- Sturdy canes or metal supports for tall growing perennials like hollyhocks and delphiniums
- Tie in the new stems of your climbers like clematis and sweet peas (before they get into a tangle), and roses.

### Containers and Hanging Baskets

Believe it or not this year, I have actually taken down my hanging basket brackets - no more hanging baskets for me because I have found the small surface area dries out so quickly. Instead, I have gone for large, deep, wide and tall wooden planters where I can plant a mix of perennials and bulbs as the basis and just top up with some summer bedding. My all-time favourite is white Nemesia, that seeds itself everywhere, much to my delight.



Nemesia



By lining the planters first with permeable material to allow drainage and protecting them with wood preserver twice a year, I hope they will enhance the garden for many years to come.

### Dahlias

Of course, there is always room for dahlias, which flower from now until the first frosts. Take a look at the white Bishop of Dover dahlia, perfect in a pot or in the front of a border.

*Don't forget the private gardens that are open to the public this summer as part of the National Garden Scheme, see page 31.*



Bishop of Dover

**Here's to a wonderful summer enjoying our gardens.**

## Choosing Your First Car

## Advice from John Sharp

Buying your first car is exciting, but it can also feel a bit overwhelming. At Sharp Automotive, we often help new drivers find cars that balance affordability, safety and reliability. One of the first things to think about is insurance. In the UK, cars are grouped from 1 to 50, with Groups 1–5 offering the cheapest premiums for new drivers. Models like the Hyundai i10, Kia Picanto, Toyota Aygo, Volkswagen Up!, and Skoda Citigo are popular choices because they're low on insurance, easy to run, and won't break the bank.

Reliability matters too. You want a car that's dependable and won't need constant repairs. The Toyota Aygo and Yaris are famous for lasting years, while the Hyundai i10 and Kia Picanto come with great warranties and low servicing costs. Even smaller cars like the Volkswagen Up! or Skoda Citigo are solid, practical options with parts easy to find.

For first-time drivers, a black box (telematics) insurance policy can also help keep costs down. It tracks how you drive and rewards safe driving, making insurance more affordable in your first year. And don't forget—smaller hatchbacks are easier to drive and park, which is perfect if you're just starting out.

If you or your family are in the market for a low insurance, cost-effective first car, log your enquiry with Sharp Automotive today. We'll keep you updated as fresh stock comes through, so you won't miss out on the right car for you.

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## **And Another Thing.....** *an occasional reflection on modern life.*

Sometimes, just **three little words** can raise your blood pressure, says **John Guest**.

For instance: **Health and Safety**. How on earth did our forefathers survive without the wisdom, insight and jolly old interference from Health & Safety? How did they cope



without a *Risk Assessment* being generated, completed, and analysed before they visited the corner shop or boarded a Number 49 bus? Of course, it *is* important that safeguards are in place where there is a very real possibility of injury or accident. However, sometimes overzealous enforcement is allowing unimpaired intrusion into our everyday lives. Some quite bizarre instances include: Bridlington Beach banning kite flying – “often propelled at high speed, this is considered a risk in a beach setting.” In 2013, plasters were not to be

found in a company’s first-aid box as, “they may cause an adverse reaction to a plaster-allergy sufferer.” A charity shop banned the sale of knitting needles – “they could be used as weapons”. Of course they could. You could also poke your eye out on a length of dry spaghetti. Therefore, ban the sale of spaghetti immediately!

Sometimes, it is the business or individual that’s applying Health & Safety doctrine as they deem appropriate, and where it doesn’t actually exist. People need to be protected from negligent employers, but there needs to be a modicum of common sense and responsibility taken by everyone. There is no such thing as a risk-free society; it is just not possible or even a good idea to remove all risk.

The jury, as they say, is still out.

Do you have your own experience to relate?

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# A welcome step forward for Southport

by Patrick Hurley, MP for Southport

As I'm sure you'll agree, the recent decision to bring children's A&E back to Southport Hospital is very good news for our town. For more than twenty years, parents in Southport have had to travel further than they should in an emergency when their child needed urgent care. That has never sat right with people here. Families quite reasonably expect that a town the size of Southport should have proper emergency services for children close to home.

I agree, and as a result, I made it one of my top priorities when I was elected in 2024 to try to bring paediatric emergency services back. The decision will mean not just that children's A&E returns to Southport Hospital, but also that the hospital receives significant investment to support those services. The latest figures suggest around £33m invested in the town just on this project alone. That matters for the hospital and for the confidence people have in our town and its future.

I have been clear since being elected as Southport's MP that securing investment for our area is one of my main priorities. For too long Southport has felt as though it has been slipping backwards while other places have moved ahead. Reversing that trend is going to take sustained effort and real investment in our public services and infrastructure.

The decision on the hospital is an important step in that direction. The same is true for the capital investment in the Town Hall Gardens, the renovation of the pier, the upgrading of the waste-water treatment works in Marshside, the building of the Marine Lake Events Centre, and a range of other projects too. However, we should also be honest about what comes next. Even once the decision is taken, it will take time before people see the results on the ground. Legal challenges, planning, construction and service changes take several years before they are fully in place.

This applies more widely across the town as well. We may all feel Southport's relative decline in our lifetimes but that did not happen in a year or two. Rather, it happened over decades. And similarly, turning things around will take time as well.

My focus is on making sure Southport receives the capital investment it needs, whether that is in our public services, our transport links, or our town centre. I am hopeful that there will be further positive news for the area in the months ahead. Southport has always been a special place. For generations it has been the north west's most prestigious seaside town, somewhere people were proud to visit and proud to live.

Restoring that reputation does not happen overnight. But with the right investment and a clear plan for the future, I believe we can get there.

The return of children's A&E to Southport Hospital is a strong signal that things are beginning to move in the right direction and is a welcome step forward.

**Office of Patrick Hurley MP** House of Commons, SW1A 0AA

Email: [patrick.hurley.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:patrick.hurley.mp@parliament.uk)

## Let's Get Reading!

The **National Year of Reading 2026** is the biggest campaign in a generation, designed to help more people discover, or rediscover, the joy of reading and make it part of their everyday lives. You are currently reading the Buzz and so you already know how reading expands our world and gives us information and pleasure!

The Birkdale Community Library will be running events for all ages throughout the year and beyond. So please pop into the Library and, if you are not already a member, sign up. It's free to join. Browse our books on the shelves or on our website, enjoy fact and fiction, graphic novels and books for young adults and children.

As part of the Year of Reading we will be holding author events and competitions, so please look out for notices in the library, on our website, or on social media. We will be introducing interactive bookmarks where you can comment on the book you have just read and perhaps suggest a title that you have enjoyed. Or you can have a go at Book Bingo - complete a line and select a gift from our book hamper.

We will be suggesting themed monthly reads, such as books featured on TV, stage and film. Events and competitions will be announced for our younger readers as we approach the summer holidays. We hope that 2026 will be a great reading year and that you will discover many new authors to enjoy.



A red advertisement for SPAR Birkdale. At the top, the SPAR logo is shown in white on a red background, with a green tree icon to its right. Below this, the word 'BIRKDALE' is written in large, white, distressed, hand-painted style letters with yellow brushstrokes on either side. The main text in the center reads: 'We are proud to continue to be at the heart of the local community and have our very own butchers in-store offering a great selection of quality meats and ready meals.' Below this text are three logos: 'CLAYTON PARK - DELI -' in a white circle, 'GRAHAM EYES - Quality Butchers -' in a black and white logo with 'Est. 1982' and a knife icon, and 'CHEEKY COFFEE CO.' in a green circle with a monkey face. At the bottom, it says 'BUTCHERS' OPENING HOURS Mon to Sat 8am - 6pm. Sun 10am - 4pm'. In the bottom right corner, there is a red circular badge that says 'VALUE ON YOUR DOORSTEP'. At the very bottom, it says 'STORE OPEN 7am - 11pm EVERYDAY' followed by the SPAR logo and the slogan 'There for you' in a green script font.

## Mango and Lime Chicken (sent in by Jill Jones)

A simple, inexpensive recipe ..sure to impress guests ...

Serves 4 (can easily be doubled!)

### INGREDIENTS

1 large ripe mango

25g coriander – stalks chopped, leaves removed (save)

2 unwaxed limes – zest of both, juice of one, rest in wedges

1 tbsp fish sauce

1kg chicken thighs – skin on/bone in

1 tbsp sunflower oil

### METHOD

Roughly chop the mango flesh and place with the coriander stalks, lime zest and juice and fish sauce in a blender. Blend until smooth.

Place the chicken in a bowl, season, add the marinade (ie above), and rub in.

Cover and chill for at least 2 hours (better still overnight).

Preheat the oven to 200°C/Gas 6.

Place the chicken in a roasting tin – skin side up – tipping over all the marinade (avoid getting too much on the skin if you want it to go crispy).

Drizzle with oil. Roast for 45-50 minutes, basting halfway until cooked through (the juices should run clear, and no pink meat remaining).

Scatter with the coriander leaves and serve with steamed jasmine rice and pak choi.



## Waste Not Want Not—A few handy tips on how to waste less bread

### Did you know...

Crusty bread, like sourdough can be wrapped in a clean tea towel or in a cotton bag and stored in a bread bin to keep fresh.

If you don't fancy making a roux (or don't know how!) left over bread can be blitzed in the food processor and used to thicken soups or sauces. Just add a little at a time to the liquid, stirring well, until you achieve the desired consistency.

Dry bread out in a low oven until rock hard, then blitz to crumbs in a food processor. Store sealed and frozen for up to three months. This can be used to bind homemade burgers, or for coating chicken etc.

Tear stale bread up into large chunks and nestle beneath a chicken whilst roasting. You will then have chicken fat croutons: Use to scatter over a roast chicken salad, chicken soup etc...

You can make a traditional pasta sauce (from Liguria) using stale bread. Simply soak the bread in milk then blitz in the food processor with walnuts, parmesan, and garlic. Delicious... and so simple! You can also replace pine nuts with dried breadcrumbs to make a delicious nut free pesto to toss through pasta.

## Who's for the Open?

Henry James

The final preparations are being made for this year's Open Championship at Royal Birkdale Golf Club to be held between 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup> July..

For the last few months, grandstands and digital scoreboards have been constructed across the world-famous links course, which is staging the event for the eleventh time. Merseyrail is getting ready to bring in thousands of golfing fans to Hillside train station each day and signs will direct motorists to special car parks around the town.



Local houses are being offered for rent at gigantic rates, and hotels and restaurants were booked out long ago. General admission tickets are sold out for the event and have been for some time, but there are still some available via ticket packages.

The best golfers from all over the world will be heading to the resort to compete in golf's oldest competition. Results from the USA Masters Tournament in April gave us a tantalising preview of form for the Open: Rory McIlroy came in first for a second time, Scottie Scheffler (last year's Open winner) came second and local favourite Tommy Fleetwood came in thirty-third after a good start. Another Englishman who would be a popular winner in Southport would be Justin Rose who came joint third at the Masters. He famously finished fourth as a 17-year-old amateur when the Open was staged here in 1998. Who can forget Rose chipping in at the 18<sup>th</sup>? With such competitors we are in for a truly thrilling event.

The winner takes home the famous Claret Jug. At the time of writing the prize fund for this year's event has not been announced. Last year, Scheffler won £2.3m from a total prize pot of £12.7 m.

### Southport & Birkdale Sports Club



Southport & Birkdale Sports Club is the leading multi-sports club in the area. Sporting members have the opportunity to concentrate on one sport or take part in all five: cricket, hockey, snooker, squash and tennis. You can play either competitively, or, in the case of squash and tennis, just socially. As the season starts for the summer sports, cricket and tennis, would you, or your children, wish to take advantage of our coaching sessions?

If you just wish to have a social membership, this allows you to use the club facilities whether it be to have a drink, at discounted prices, on a summer afternoon, watching the cricket, take a meal supplied by the renowned D'vine Catering, or attend one of the many functions arranged throughout the year.

All these functions are detailed on the Club website or you can telephone to get more information, see below

Contact: Claire Crew, Honorary Membership Secretary, email - [clcrew36@gmail.com](mailto:clcrew36@gmail.com)

S&B Sports Club, Trafalgar Road, Birkdale PR8 2HF Tel. 01704 569951

website [www.sandbsportsclub.co.uk](http://www.sandbsportsclub.co.uk) Email: [social@sandbsportsclub.co.uk](mailto:social@sandbsportsclub.co.uk)

## Cricket at a slower pace

One of the sporting success stories of the past 12 months has been the growing popularity of **Walking Cricket** at Dunes leisure centre in Southport.

Aimed at the Over 50s, with a view to improving physical health and mental wellbeing and established originally in November 2024, the group has been gradually building in numbers, with 40 players now registered and a regular turnout of around 20 every week. Because of this success the one-hour sessions have recently been extended to two hours.

The Southport group remains on the lookout for new members. Anyone interested, male or female, should just turn up at **Dunes for a 10.00 a.m. start on any Thursday.**



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## 159: a number worth remembering

A recent newspaper article alerted your Editor to the **159 Hotline**, a dedicated service in the UK designed to help individuals connect directly with their bank's fraud prevention team. This service is particularly useful for those who suspect they are being targeted by scammers. 159 provides a secure way for customers to verify the legitimacy of calls or messages claiming to be from their bank and thus protect themselves from financial fraud.

How to respond to a suspicious call:

- Hang up and call 159 to confirm whether the communication was genuine. The number 159 (the three diagonal numbers on a numeric keypad) cannot be spoofed by scammers.
- Identify Your Bank: You will be prompted to provide the name of your bank, either by speaking or using your keypad.
- Secure Connection: You will be connected directly to your bank, allowing you to discuss any concerns about potential fraud.

***Keep 159 in your mind – it could save you a lot of anxiety.***

## Pet Corner

by Paul Crowther

I don't know about you, but I am terrible at remembering people's names. So, when I got a phone call from my friend Eamonn saying that he was having a drink in the Fishermen's Rest with three friends and did I want to join them, I was conflicted. On the one hand, a couple of cheeky midweek pints sounded like an excellent plan but on the other hand there would be three new faces for me to fail to put names to. The lure of the Fish prevailed, and it turned out I already knew one of his friends and he was called Pete. That just left two more people's names for me to fret over. The strange thing was that the two people I hadn't met before were both also called Pete, so my anxiety instantly evaporated and I had conquered my personal three Petes challenge!

In contrast to my struggles with human names, I never had a problem remembering pets names when I was working as a vet and even today, when I meet people with their dogs, I am more likely to remember the pet's name than the owners. When it comes to pet names, I do consider myself a bit of a connoisseur, probably due to calling so many of them into my consulting room over the years.

The first thing to remember about pet names is that everyone thinks that their chosen name is the best, and it is futile trying to argue with that. Using the same logic, my own choices are a good place to start. My first pets as a married man were a pair of male cats and we named them Norman and Woody after characters in the popular TV-series 'Cheers'. But the real stroke of genius came when we got two dogs a few years later. Cheers had run its course but there was a spin-off series focusing on one of the cast, called Frasier. We named the dogs Eddie and Daphne after characters in this new series.

This clearly exhausted our creative juices because since then we have gone for rather more random pet names. We currently have Rhodri, who came from a farm in North Wales and is named after the comedian Rhod Gilbert, and Kevin, who we took over after his owner sadly passed away. He was named not after Kevin Keegan or Harry Enfield's character Kevin the teenager, or even Coronation Street's Kevin Webster but after a cartoon character in the film 'Minions', a movie I have to confess I had never heard of. It was actually his owner's granddaughter who named him and my ignorance shows just how out of touch I am. Even though it was not of our choosing, I have to admit that Kevin is a great name and brings endless laughs when we shout it out on Ainsdale Beach.



**Do you have a couple of hours to spare each month to help Birkdale village?**

We are looking to increase our ranks in our Birkdale Bloomers' team and would love to welcome some new volunteers to help us with the planting and maintenance of the village planters.

If you would be interested please feel free to drop us a message on our social media, or an email to

[info@birkdalecivicsociety.org.uk](mailto:info@birkdalecivicsociety.org.uk)



## A Local Doctor writes on Weight-Loss Treatments

A common conversation topic at the moment is the increasing use of various drugs to treat type-2 diabetes and support weight loss. One “GLP-1” type of such drugs involves a chemical similar to the hormone glucagon (sold as Ozempic and Wegovy). A newer option, tirzepatide (sold as Mounjaro), works on two hormone systems and may lead to greater weight loss in some people.

These medications mimic natural gut hormones. They help the body release insulin, reduce appetite, and slow how quickly food leaves the stomach. Many people experience gradual weight loss (up to 20% of body weight over a year in studies), better blood sugar control, and sometimes improvements in blood pressure and cholesterol.

For older adults, they can be particularly useful where excess weight or diabetes is affecting mobility or overall health. However, they are not a quick fix and work best alongside healthy eating and regular physical activity.

A key point is what happens when you stop them - you are not ‘cured’ once you have lost weight. Appetite often returns, and some weight regain is common, even usual. Blood sugar levels may rise again if diabetes was being treated. This shows that the medication’s effects only work while it is being taken, so a long-term plan is important.

Discuss all this with your GP!

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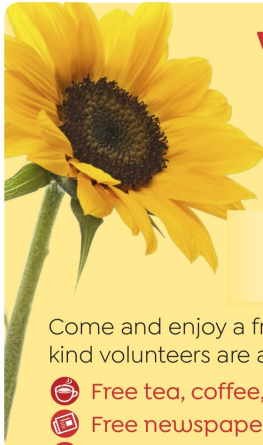
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## What’s happening at Birkdale Community Library?

Groups that meet here on a regular basis include: Rhyme Time, Story Time, Shared Reading, Knit & Natter, Lego Club, Computer Club and Junior Chess Club, most of which are free to join. We also host drop-in sessions for you to meet local councillors and Merseyside police officers.



The library charity organises fundraising events every few weeks with all profits helping to support your local charity, Birkdale Community Library. These include music nights, regular quiz evenings, open mornings and special events we host around Birkdale during the year.

Our information board, just inside the library, displays posters of what is happening in the library and elsewhere in the area, eg U3a meetings, singing groups, talks, walking groups, etc.

For information about what is happening at the library and details about our fundraising events and group activities, please call in to the Station Master’s House (next to the station) and speak to our volunteers or contact us on:

**T: 01704 566 992 E: [contact@thestationmastershouse.co.uk](mailto:contact@thestationmastershouse.co.uk)**

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## On Grief

Death is a universal experience. We go through many emotions and physical changes when a person dies, yet how others respond can be surprising and upsetting. As a therapist who works with the bereaved, my clients often say they feel ignored by those they considered good friends or colleagues.

It is difficult to know how to respond to a friend who has been bereaved; some seem effortlessly to have the right words and offer comfort. For those who struggle to find the right words, it sometimes feels easier to say nothing and the best way to do this is avoidance. We cannot take grief away. Death is awkward. It is difficult to tell others when someone dies. We often tell others gently to avoid upsetting them, putting their feelings first. We navigate the feelings and emotions of everyone else alongside our own.

An effective way to manage grief is to strengthen our bonds with others; one of the best ways to do this is through communication. We cannot fix grief, but we can offer support through talking honestly. If you do not know what to say, be authentic. If you feel sad or uncomfortable making the approach, say it. If you worry you will make them cry, tell them. When someone dies, others offering sympathy can be upsetting, yet being actively avoided can be alienating, isolating and damage friendships when we need them most.

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The next issue of the Birkdale Buzz will be out in **September 2026**  
Advert requests, contributions, questions or feedback should be submitted to the Editor by **13 July 2026**  
[birkdalebuzz@thestationmastershouse.co.uk](mailto:birkdalebuzz@thestationmastershouse.co.uk)



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## Books at Home

Birkdale Community Library runs a **Books at Home** visiting service for local residents who are unable to get to a library and would like to borrow from our extensive range of books. The service is free and working well. At the moment, our six volunteers visit around 70 readers, some at home but most in residential care homes.

Our volunteers find out what type of books are of interest and provide a selection from which to choose. The readers like a mixture of large print and regular print. One of our first clients is an avid reader and, so far, has borrowed well over 300 books. Some readers are asking for audio books too as their eyesight starts to fail and we are planning to lend CD players for listeners in the near future.

We are keen to expand the service to those living on their own at home who like to read, would be interested in a new range of books, but find it difficult to get out. So, if you are living on your own, or know someone living on their own or in a care home who would like to receive a visit from our volunteers, please email us at:

[homevisit@thestationmastershouse.co.uk](mailto:homevisit@thestationmastershouse.co.uk) or call the library on 01704 566992



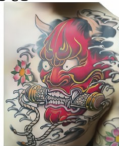
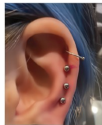
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## An opportunity missed....

In 1966 a friend won a scholarship to an American university and decided to get there by sea. He chose to travel on the Queen Mary which offered a regular Atlantic service. I had known the liner all my life; it was a routine sight coming out of Southampton, circling the Isle of Wight and heading down the English Channel to New York at a good lick.



We travelled up to Southampton together from Devon. When we arrived at the docks he offered me a tour of the ship and afternoon tea, after which I would disembark and go home. I thought for a moment: I hadn't been home for a while and was looking forward to seeing the family. I could always do this another time; the Queen Mary would always be there. So, I politely declined.

One year later, in 1967, the liner was taken out of regular transatlantic liner service. She made her final voyage to Long Beach, California, where she is permanently moored as a tourist attraction. I did get to see her there and she is still magnificent, a wonderful example of Art Deco design and power. But I missed the opportunity of seeing her alive as the world's greatest liner and learnt a good life lesson: always take the opportunity when it comes along.



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Editor: here is the first of a new review series from **Waterstones** in Southport

## New Book Reviews

We at **Waterstones** are delighted to be able to contribute to the Birkdale Buzz. Even though our day job is selling books, the joy of visiting our local library as children, and adults, still resonates. To that end we are keen to support Birkdale Community Library however we can.

Each quarter, we will review forthcoming books we are excited to read, or those we have had the opportunity to read and have loved.

**LAND** by Maggie O'Farrell – Ireland, 1865, following the Great Famine. On a windswept peninsula, Tomas and his reluctant son Liam are mapping Ireland for the Ordnance Survey, until an unsettling encounter upends their lives. With his father not himself, how will 10-year-old Liam get the mapping done before the British soldiers arrive? This is a story of ancient woodland, ghosts from the past and a very loyal dog. From the award-winning author of *Hamnet*, comes a novel of survival, reunion and the secrets that only the land can hold. Published in Hardback on 2<sup>nd</sup> June 2026.

**A KILLER IN PARADISE** by Tom Hindle. Five old friends are invited to join Abigail Blythe at the launch of her luxury hotel in the Costa Rican rainforest. The friends haven't seen each other for ten years, since the summer they went backpacking in Central America, a trip which ended in disaster for one of them. Very shortly after their arrival, the friends learn that this is far from the holiday of a lifetime. Someone is already dead, old rivalries surface, and one of them might just be a killer. This homage to Agatha Christie, set against a sun-drenched backdrop, is full of double bluffs that will keep you guessing to the very end. From the author of *A Fatal Crossing*. Published in paperback on 2<sup>nd</sup> July 2026

**MOTHER MARY COMES TO ME** by Arundhati Roy. An intimate memoir from the prize-winning author about her thorny relationship with her mother, Mary Roy. An activist and fearless educator, Mary Roy did not have the easiest relationship with her child. This is a story of poverty and emotional abuse, but ultimately Arundhati Roy concludes that her mother, who she calls 'her shelter and her storm', shaped the kind of writer she became. From the Booker prize winning author of *The God of Small Things*. Published in paperback on 11<sup>th</sup> June 2026.



### Looking for an opportunity to volunteer part-time?

Birkdale Community Library welcomes applications from new volunteers. To find out what opportunities are currently available, please email [volunteers@thestationmastershouse.co.uk](mailto:volunteers@thestationmastershouse.co.uk) or pop into the library to request an application form.



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## Coot or Moorhen?

*My bonnie moorhen has feathers anew  
She's a' bricht colours but nane o' them blue  
She's red and she's white, and she's green and she's grey  
My bonnie moorhen come hither away.*

(Trad Scots)

Wherever there is fresh or brackish still or slow-flowing water, from field drain to mere, one is likely to find mid-sized birds, mostly charcoal grey or black, swimming around. If the bird is walking on land, then its massive feet are a very obvious feature. But is it a Coot (*Fulica atra*) or a Moorhen (*Gallinula chloropus*)? On any number of occasions I've heard that question being asked as young and old alike stare, quite unsure.



Not too difficult once you know how, though, to tell which is which in the adult bird. If it is just black with a white face and silver-grey legs, it's a coot – BTW this white appearance is the origin of the expression “bald as a coot”. The moorhen, however, as noted in the verse, has many colours, most obviously the red and yellow of its beak and yellow legs which are very like those of chickens. The easiest way to remember this is that the “R” in Moorhen stands for “Red” and there is no “R” in Coot.

There is a wrinkle, however, in that young coots don't show white faces. At this time of year instead look out for the fledgling coots with their red punkish 'hairdos' and beaks. They soon lose this distinctive look, however, and gain the white face when they are a few months old.

### I-spy – what to look out for in parks and gardens

The Great Tit (*Parus major*) is the UK's largest tit species and very familiar as a visitor to our bird feeders. What you may not know, however, is that even if they may all look the same at first glance, it is not too difficult to tell adult male from adult female. The distinguishing feature is the dark stripe down the breast, being markedly wider in the male. Over the next few months this year's juveniles will also be around, with duller plumage overall, indistinct stripe and a yellowish face.



## Our Local Election Results Stand Out

As the Buzz goes to press on the day after the 2026 local elections, the Reform Party tsunami of election successes is sweeping across the country. But here in Sefton the results have turned out rather differently. Rather than Reform dominating the results, the picture is more complicated. The Green and Reform parties both slightly increased their councillor numbers, while the Tory party now has no Sefton councillors. Overall, Liberal Democrats have done well at the expense of the Labour party. However, despite losing 15 councillors, Labour has retained leadership of Sefton council. Locally, in the wards of Birkdale, Dukes, Kew and Ainsdale to the south of Southport, 11 of the 12 councillors elected were Liberal Democrats along with one Reform party member.

Congratulations to the newly-elected councillors on their election. Here's hoping that they have success in making Birkdale an even better place to live.

Here is a summary of election results across Sefton and our new local councillors:

Pre-Election Councillor Nos.	Post-Election Councillor Nos.	% vote in 2026	Local Councillors (number of votes)	
Labour 51	Labour 36	30	<b>Birkdale Ward</b>	Iain Brodie-Browne (1794) LibDem
LibDem. 9	LibDem. 17	16	(= landward of traintrack)	Simon Shaw (1645) LibDem
Conserv. 3	Conserv. 0	8		Michael Ryder (1372) Reform
Green 1	Green 3	13	<b>Dukes Ward</b>	John Pugh (1653) LibDem
Reform 1	Reform 5	27	(= seaward of traintrack)	Michael Braham (1445) LibDem
Others 1	Others 5	6		Daniel Howard (1343) LibDem



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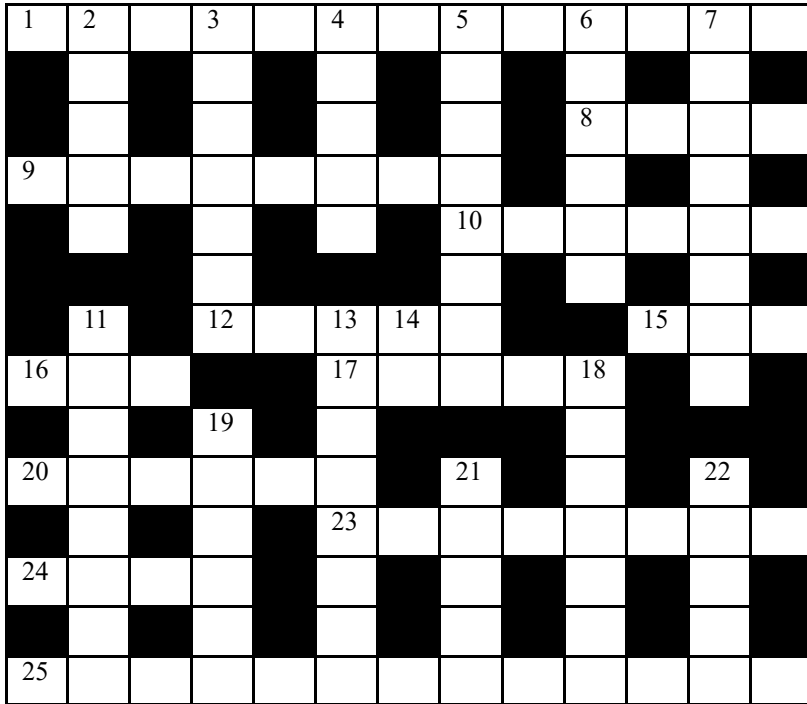
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## Summertime Crossword by Dandyman *Answers on page 38*



### ACROSS

- Venue of the 154<sup>th</sup> Open Golf Championship. (5, 8)
- Covet. (4)
- Outdoor grill. (8)
- Bit of a dud, fruits. (6)
- First shot played in 1 across. (5)
- Our very own magazine insect. (3)
- What one tries to achieve by sunbathing. (3)
- Bottle? (5)
- Walk in the sea. (6)
- Types of beer served in the Grasshopper micro-pub. (4, 4)
- Fruit of a New Zealander perhaps. (4)
- Amusement. (13)

### DOWN

- Body of water, where canoe capsized, perhaps. (5)
- Aid for a non-swimmer. (7)
- Sandy area found in Ainsdale, Birkdale and Southport. (5)
- Partygoer. (8)
- Hopes and desires. (6)
- A quintessential summer plant. (7)
- Holiday. (8)
- Data highway. (8)
- Victory in Europe day. (1, 1)
- Printing error. (7)
- Guidance, counsel. (5)
- Drought-tolerant houseplants. (5)
- Liquid abundant in a pine tree. (5)

## History Boys

## Paul Crowther

Richard and I have only been friends for about four years, but we have so many shared interests that it feels like we have known each other for a lot longer. Both of us are passionate about MMA: Medieval Military Architecture. Castles are our thing and when Richard mentioned that he would like to explore some of the plentiful strongholds of North Wales I needed no second invitation. I spent a lot of time in North Wales growing up so had ample opportunity to satisfy my love of castles whereas to Richard they were mostly uncharted territory. It was a win-win, Richard would get to see some of the finest military architecture in in the UK while I got the perfect excuse to revisit places I love.

Richard asked that on our first trip we visit Rhuddlan Castle as he had spent a holiday nearby as a child, so I planned the day around that. We set off early one Monday morning over the Runcorn Bridge bound for castle country. I took a brief detour to Gwaenysgor as my great grandparents are buried in the churchyard there. We enjoyed the magnificent view from the top of Prestatyn Mountain and from that vantage point it was downhill all the way to Rhuddlan.



The castle is a pleasant place to spend half an hour or so. It was built by Edward 1st in the late 13th century as part of his campaign to subdue the Welsh. He wished to have his castles supplied by sea, straightening and dredging the nearby River Clwyd to allow this. The castle, ultra-modern for its time with concentric walls giving two lines of defence, is now reduced to ruins. Having inspected them we moved on to the nearby site of the original Norman castle rendered redundant by Edward's construction. The only piece remaining is a large mound of earth, the motte, known as Twthill.

All this exploration had left us rather peckish so, fortunately, I had taken the liberty of booking a table at the Plough Inn in nearby St Asaph. The food and service were excellent and as designated driver I had my first-ever pint of Guinness Zero. It was so convincing that I had to double check it really was alcohol free.

Fully refreshed, we made our way to our second castle of the day, Ewloe near Queensferry. Richard wanted to see a native Welsh castle, and this ticked that box. It is a 10-minute walk from the lay-by that serves as a car park, and the castle remains hidden until the last moment. Whereas most castles were constructed in plain sight to intimidate an enemy, Ewloe was built to be concealed from prying eyes in a hollow and surrounded by trees. It was probably built by Llewelyn the Great in the early 13th century as protection against the English. We spent a rewarding time walking amongst the ruins before returning to the car for the hour or so drive home. The historical chat carried on, as it had done all day, making the journey fly by. It was a lovely day out for two amigos enjoying their passion for MMA in the land of my forefathers.



## A Day in the Life of a Heating Engineer

It's 7:30 am and Keith is in his van, on the road and heading to the Tower Heating office. A mandatory cup of tea, a quick laugh with the lads and a check in with the ladies on the phones - then it's down to business. Restock the van, pack some boiler parts and see what adventures his diary has in store for him today.

First stop: a stunning property on Oxford Road. Keith sorts out a high-tech system to ensure his customer's swimming pool stays warm. A consummate professional, Keith decides he doesn't need to dive-bomb into the deep end to check the temperature. At least this time....

An hour later, he's across town in a small but cozy flat. An elderly lady has been worried about her pilot light. Keith isn't just here to fix a boiler; he's here to provide peace of mind so she can rest easy. A sandwich in the van at lunch and a check-in call to his wife serves as his recharge before the afternoon surge.

He monitors "smoke signals" while testing a gas fire, ensures a cooker is working correctly and provides expert advice to a young couple considering a full gas re-piping. His final victory of the day? Getting the hot-water back on for a family of four - bath time is saved! The tools are stowed. The van is locked. Keith heads home to rest, maybe popping out to **Birkdale Village** for a bite to eat.

Some heroes don't wear capes. Keith sticks his uniform in the wash before heading for his own warm shower and bed. Refreshed and ready to save the day for his customers all over again tomorrow.



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The National Garden Scheme gives visitors access to a number of private gardens in May and July and raises impressive amounts of money for nursing and health charities through admissions, teas and cakes.

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12 Saxon Road PR8 2AX (Sunday 31st May)

81 Burnley Road PR8 3LP (Sunday 31st May)

5 Cromer Road PR8 2NH (Sunday 31st May/Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July)

34 Dunbar Crescent PR8 3AB (Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> July)

For dates and details of when other gardens will be open to the public please pick up a copy of the 2026 NGS brochure from Birkdale Community Library or visit the website: [ngs.org.uk](https://ngs.org.uk) for full details.

## Want to Help your Birkdale Library?



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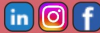


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## Summer's here, don't delay by local artist Graham McQuade

With summer here, it couldn't be a better time to try your hand at drawing or painting. Out in the sunshine, worries forgotten, submerge yourself in the glories of a landscape or garden.

Just a pencil and paper are needed, though, if you have them, try out those paints that have lain, unloved, in the cupboard.

Understandingly people are concerned about getting a likeness. In many respects this isn't important, but getting a church, say, to look like the church that's in front of you can instil confidence. One trick is the use of a key measure. A key measure for the church might be the tower's width. It's neither too big nor too small in relation to the rest of the building. Draw the outsides of the tower in an appropriate place on your paper. Now, with your pencil held horizontally in your fist with your thumb uppermost and your arm as straight as you can get it, with one eye align the tip of the pencil against one edge of the tower's wall and slide your thumb to align that with the other edge. That is your key measure. Twist your hand around to vertical and measure the tower's height against the pencil tip and thumb (keeping your arm rigidly straight). Say it is two and a half measures. Returning to your drawing, put the pencil against one line and slide your thumb to the other line. Mark off two and a half measures on your paper vertically up one line. You have the correct height of the tower. Positions of the rest of the church can be similarly plotted, putting in details as you observe them to obtain a drawing with a realistic air.

Perspective can be established with the horizon line i.e. a horizontal line in the distance at your own altitude if a hill or building obscures the real thing. If you are standing and there is a figure also standing in the distance at your level, then the horizon line goes through their head. Any roof lines or lines of windows etc. that recede from you do so defined by a line to the horizon. The higher the object, ie window, the steeper the line to the horizon. More detailed explanations of this are online or in books.

But many artists have never let realism nor perspective get in the way of expression, from the Ancient Egyptians and Chinese through to the Mannerists and on to Basquiat or Wiley.

Don't delay, get into the garden, check out some flowers and see how the shortest side compares to the longest, and start drawing their shapes.

If you enjoy this, then you still have time to enlist in an art class in September, armed with an idea of where you need help and what you would like to develop. Good luck.

[grahammcquadefineart.com](http://grahammcquadefineart.com)

[grahammcquade.wordpress.com](http://grahammcquade.wordpress.com)



# Hospitality and History

## Paul Ferguson reports on a visit to Cyprus

This was our first visit to the island and we found a country which was clearly thriving. Yes, there was lots of building activity, but this hasn't spoilt the natural beauty of the island and the feeling that this warm, welcoming place has seen a lot of history, going back thousands of years.

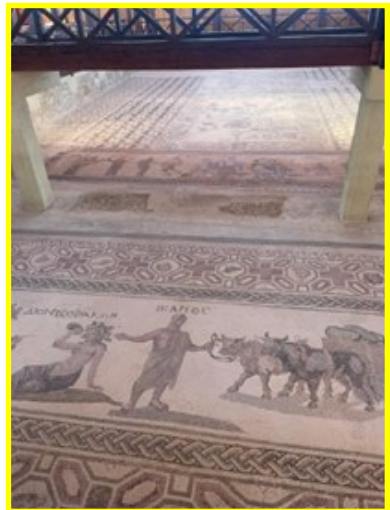
The links with the UK go back to 1878 when the island was acquired from the Ottoman Empire. Cypriot independence from Britain came in 1960, but disputes between different communities led in the 1970s to the introduction of a UN buffer-zone between the Turkish northern part of the island and the larger Greek part to the south. Both are well worth visiting but this article is solely about the southern, Greek, part.

Tourism remains a mainstay of the economy. This was very apparent near the coast, with luxury hotels and many amenities, but you don't have to venture very far inland to find a more traditional rural village lifestyle. What was common to all areas, however, was the friendly welcome of the Cypriot people we met.

That warmth of welcome, together with the very reasonable cost of living, the familiarity of driving on the left and the ease of communicating in English, have combined to make Cyprus very much a home-from-home for a large UK ex-pat community. Some Brits have bought a property to escape part of the UK winter whilst many have chosen to live there permanently.

During our trip we enjoyed walks in the forested hillsides and along the coastline, terrific tavernas with excellent food, ancient monasteries and vineyards. However, the stand-out experience was in visiting the various archaeological sites. The principal one near Paphos contained spectacularly well-preserved mosaics from extensive Roman villas, with this picture representing a small sample of what is to be seen.

Getting to Cyprus is easy via a number of lower cost airlines, and accommodation is available at reasonable cost, be that in a hotel or rented apartment/villa. Car hire is also cheap in comparison with many countries – you just need to be aware of the multiple speed bumps which are a frequent feature in the country's road system!



In conclusion we'd have no hesitation in recommending a visit to the island, be that in the cooler but quieter off-season months over the winter, or in the busier summer ones for sun-lovers.

# Housing Perspectives: a professional view from Karen Potter

## *The Soft Sell*

Preparing your home for sale can sometimes be a challenge, particularly if you're living in a busy family home. Seeing to any general maintenance jobs is essential in creating the best first impression; buyers will notice potential negatives, but these can also give the impression that there are more invisible repairs required, which may not be the case.

Your Estate Agent will run through their recommendations for presentation, which is particularly useful because, as a result of their experience selling homes, they may see something you might not. The front of your home is often the most important because that's the first area your viewers will focus on. Pay attention to tidying the front garden; removing bins or rubbish; ensure any repainting or repairs are attended to. Is the hallway clear of coats and shoes etc? You don't want it to feel crowded when you welcome your viewers. The goal is to create an inviting, clear, first impression.

Focus on any possessions or clutter throughout the house which could be re-homed before you start marketing, fix any decorating jobs because these small jobs create a more positive impression. Storage is important for many buyers, particularly families. Make sure your cupboards are organised and not crammed with items you don't need.

Don't wait until you move to clear clutter. Do it beforehand for the best possible outcome to your sale. Uncluttered rooms assist hugely with the photography of your home..... and, crucially, securing that all-important sale!



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## Printing and Copying Services at Birkdale Community Library

Do you know that Birkdale Community Hub and Library offers printing and copying services at the Station Master's House? You can print from your phone or from one of the computers at the library for just 10p per page, in colour or black and white, single or double sided. Photocopying is the same price. We also offer a laminating service at 50p per page.



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## Local care home celebrates 50 Years in Birkdale

Connell Court will be well known to many Birkdale residents as it has been providing care for the elderly for fifty years from its purpose-built facility on Weld Road. This year it celebrates its **golden anniversary on 4<sup>th</sup> July** and will host a Garden Party to mark its presence in the community.



Connell Court is managed by Crestview Care, a Wigan-based company which also runs a home in Preston. Previously, the home was part of the Methodist Homes Association and retains its connection with the Methodist Church via the church at the junction of Liverpool Road and Sandon Road.

There is an in-house chaplain who holds services on Wednesday mornings and on Sundays, who is assisted by other ministers on the Methodist circuit for other services. The chaplain is supported by ministers from other local churches including Baptist, Evangelical and United Reformed Church and by the Pastoral Team from the Roman Catholic Church.

Residents appreciate having strong links with the local community. Crestview Care has made a donation to the Birkdale Community Library, and also this year Queenscourt Hospice was nominated by the residents as their “*Charity of Choice*”, raising £382 from a coffee morning and raffle. Local schools also benefit from their association with the home which supports intergenerational work as part of the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award.

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# Springtime Crossword Answers

## Across

1. Royal Birkdale
8. Envy
9. Barbecue
10. Lemons
12. Drive
15. Bee
16. Tan
17. Nerve
20. Paddle
23. Real Ales
24. Kiwi
25. Entertainment

## Down

2. Ocean
3. Armband
4. Beach
5. Reveller
6. Dreams
7. Lavender
11. Vacation
13. Internet
14. VE
18. Erratum
19. Advice
21. Cacti
22. Resin



## Young People: News from the Library

Birkdale Community Library organises lots of activities involving young people.

We celebrated four years of **Storytime** in April. The sessions are run by volunteers, every Saturday, 10.30 to 11.15am at the Station Master's House. Children up to the age of four are welcome to listen to stories, dance, play musical instruments and watch the bubbles.



**Lego club** goes from strength to strength, Sam, our Lego expert is there to help with ideas or just leave the makers to their own creations. If you're looking for a missing Lego brick or a special present for a youngster he has a great depth of knowledge of the Lego world. Saturdays 10.30 to 11.30 all ages welcome.

We are offering **Work Experience** and **Duke of Edinburgh** placements to young people from local secondary schools and we host visits from other groups such as Beavers and Rainbows. School visits are always welcomed and we are keen to grow our partnerships with more schools.

Our **Junior Chess Club** is popular and the members now have monthly tournaments, which are keenly contested!

But 2026 is a year of particular importance - it's the **National Year of Reading** and we have lots of activities planned - both reading and painting challenges. We are working with Waterstones book shop to display some of our Summer prize winners.

Reading expands worlds, sharpens minds and fuels creativity (National Year of Reading 2026).

**Come and join us - it's time to Go All In!**

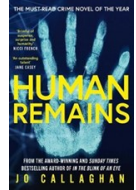


## New books in Birkdale Community Library

Our collection is constantly being added to - last month Birkdale Community Library added 156 recently published books to its shelves. For a complete list of new titles scan the QR code at the bottom of the page.

**Human Remains. Jo Callaghan.** *A new title from bestselling author of A Blink of An Eye.*

The discovery of a headless, handless body on a Warwickshire farm marks the beginning of a complex new case for DCS Kat Frank and AIDE – the world's first AI detective. Fresh from successfully closing their first live case, the Future Policing Unit are called in to investigate when a headless, handless body is found on a Warwickshire farm. When DCS Kat Frank is accused of putting the wrong man behind bars all those years ago, AIDE Lock – the world's first AI detective – pursues the truth about what happened with relentless logic.



**The Violin Maker's Secret. Evie Woods.**



On any given day, there are thousands of items slowly gathering dust in the Lost and Found of Heathrow Airport. Unknown to anyone, hidden among the clutter, is a very special object that can change the fortunes of those who possess it – a violin of rare beauty and power. Now, as if by chance, it has fallen into the hands of three strangers...

Baggage claim agent Devlin, retired teacher Walter, and appraiser Gabrielle have nothing in common, but can these three unlikely guardians unlock the secrets of the violin?

**Dear Debbie. Frieda McFadden.**

Sometimes, enough is enough... Debbie Mullen is losing it. For years, she has compiled her best advice into her column, *Dear Debbie*, where the wives of New England come for sympathy and advice. Through her work, Debbie has heard from countless women who are ignored, belittled, or even abused by their husbands. And Debbie does her best to guide them in the right direction. *Or at least, she did.*



These days, Debbie's life seems to be out of control. She just lost her job. Something strange is happening with her teenage daughters. And her husband is keeping secrets. Now, Debbie's done being the bigger person. It's time for payback against all the people in her life who deserve it the most.

**Don't miss out on a good book**

New titles are popular so to secure that new bestseller, why not log into your library account to see a list of new books, search the library catalogue, reserve the book you want? For the digitally terrified, our volunteers will be happy to place reservations for you. We'll also let you know when your reservation is ready to collect. Scan the QR code to go straight to the library catalogue.



## ***Important Numbers and Information***

Birkdale Community Hub & Library: 01704 566 992

BCHL website: [www.thestationmastershouse.co.uk](http://www.thestationmastershouse.co.uk)

Station Master's House: 2 Liverpool Road, Birkdale, PR8 4AR

Liverpool Road Methodist Church: Liverpool Road, PR8 4PD

Fire, Ambulance, Police emergency	999
Police (non-emergency)	101
NHS Health Advice	111
Out of Hours GP service	01704 395 755
Southport Police Station	0151 709 6010
Southport Community Fire Station	0151 296 6650
United Utilities (emergency)	0345 672 3723
Gas emergency (if gas smell)	0800 111 999
Sefton Council Services	0345 140 0845
National Rail Enquiries	03457 484 950
Southport Citizens Advice	0808 278 7841
Benefits Enquiry Line	0151 934 3660
Job Centre Plus	0800 1690190
Passport Advice Line	0300 222 0000
Samaritans	116 123
RSPCA Southport	01704 567 624

## **Defibrillators in Birkdale**

- in the Merseyrail Ticket Office
- on the side wall of Samuels & Co
- on the side wall of Morrisons Daily
- St Peter's Church
- Busy Bees Nursery, Lulworth Road
- Bedford Park
- Liverpool Road Methodist Church next to the entrance to the main hall
- Salvation Army, Shakespeare Street
- S&B Sports Club Trafalgar Road
- The Lifeboat Shop
- Birkdale Primary School
- Between Hillside Pharmacy and the Grasshopper, Sandon Road

## **Social Media Links**



@Birkdale Community Hub and Library



@birkdale\_hub\_library



Birkdale CH&L

