

# STONESTHROW DIRECTORY

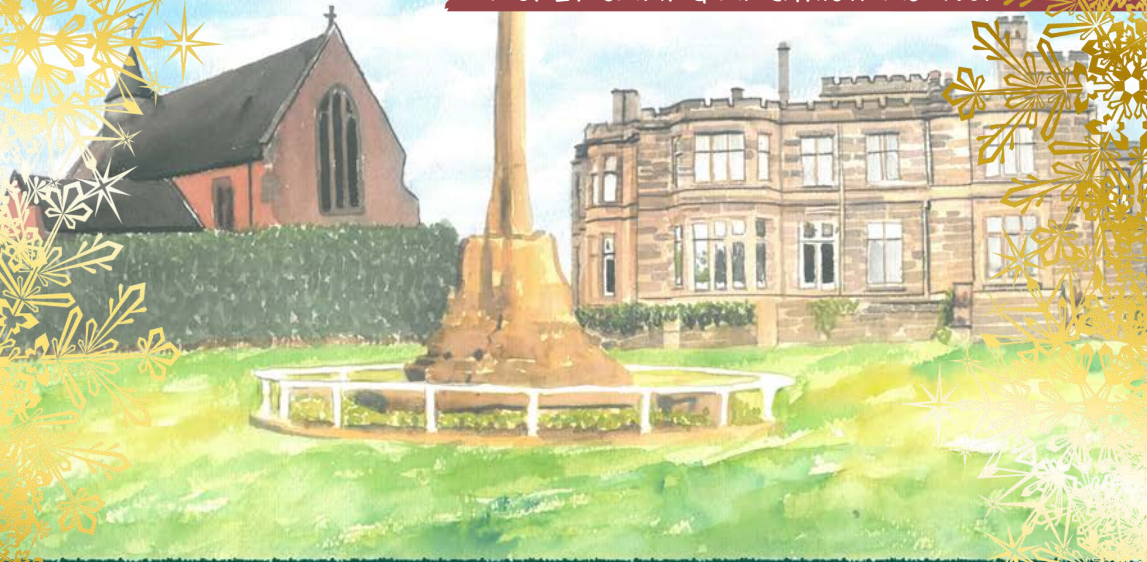
Merry  
Christmas

BRIGHTEN UP THIS CHRISTMAS FOR AN OLDER PERSON P.26

USEFUL LOCAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS / ARTICLES / HOROSCOPES

WHAT'S ON / LOCAL RESTAURANTS & TAKEAWAYS

MONEY SAVING AT CHRISTMAS P.31



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# A NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

Hello and welcome to our December/January edition of Stonesthrow Directory.

With Christmas rapidly approaching, I'm sure I'm not alone in keeping my fingers crossed and hoping for this year's celebrations to be somewhat close to "normal". Spending time with family is our number one priority, so hopefully your big gatherings are back on the cards after a two-year hiatus. I've noticed that it looks like "business as usual" for the organisers of the numerous Christmas markets, school fairs, Santa's grottos, pantos, and musical concerts in our region – if our magazines' What's On pages are anything to go by! It appears that we're craving some hopeful pragmatism, and we want to find ways to make this a Christmas to remember despite the hardships going on around us. So I'm urging all our readers and customers to do two things this year: 1. Shop local as much as you can. Almost half of small business owners say that if everyone in their local community spent just £5 extra per week with small businesses it would help them to stay open in the long term. 2. Look out for our elderly and most vulnerable neighbours, who can find it difficult to get out to the shops or to keep their house adequately heated during the colder months, and just check that they are OK.

Here are the dates for your calendar:

- 25<sup>th</sup> of December - Christmas Day (Bank Holiday);
- 26<sup>th</sup> of December - Boxing Day (Bank Holiday);
- 27<sup>th</sup> of December - Substitute Bank Holiday for Christmas Day;
- 1<sup>st</sup> of January - New Year's Day (Bank Holiday);
- 2<sup>nd</sup> of January - New Year's Day observed (Bank Holiday).

However you celebrate the festive season, we wish joy and peace to all our readers from everyone here at Stonesthrow Directories. Until next time, Merry Christmas & Happy New Year!

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WHAT'S ON LOCALLY  
**24-25**



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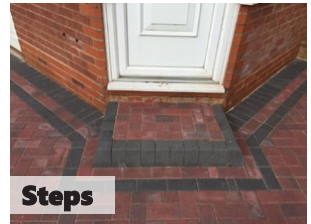
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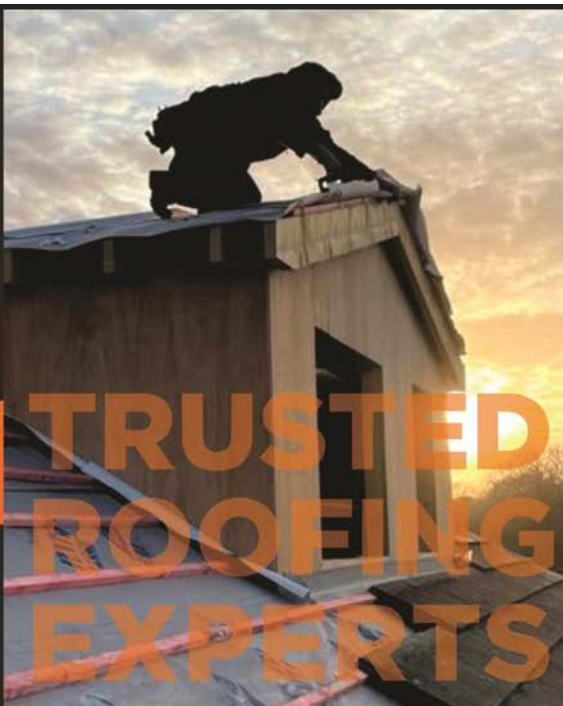
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# WHAT'S ON LOCALLY

## **Balsall Common Country Market**

Date: every Saturday / Time: 10am - 11.30am /  
Venue: The Jubilee, 225 Station Road, Balsall  
Common CV7 7FE

We are more than just a place to shop – we are a place where people meet and belong. Come and have a cup of tea or coffee with us along with home-made cakes and goodies. Our range of foods includes cakes to die for, savoury meals you can pop in the freezer for later in the week and jams and marmalades in a class of their own. We have splendid flower arrangements, plants for your garden that include both the unusual and old favourites. Our fruits and vegetables are home grown and wholesome.

## **Coffee Together**

Date: first Saturday of every month / Time:  
10.30am - 12noon; Venue: The Jubilee Centre,  
225 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7FE  
Organised by Churches together in Balsall  
Common and Berkswell. Entry fee is £2. this  
includes coffee and pre-wrapped biscuit. All  
profits go to charity. Enquiries to Clare Laland at  
clmap18@gmail.com

## **Balsall Common Memories Cafe**

Date: Every 2nd Wednesday of the month /  
Time: 1.30pm - 3pm / Balsall Common Village  
Hall, Station Road, Balsall Common CV7 7FF  
For those with Dementia accompanied by their  
'Carer' our free afternoon sessions provide an  
opportunity to meet together over refreshments  
and enjoy a varied programme of Activities and  
Entertainment. For further information contact  
Christine 01676 532793.

## **Balsall Common Memories Cafe. Coffee and Chat**

Date: Every 4th Wednesday of the month / Time:  
10.30am - 12.30pm / Venue: St Peter's Hall,  
Holly Lane, Balsall Common CV7 7EA  
NEW for '22! Our additional free sessions for  
those with Dementia accompanied by their  
'Carer' are a time to Drop in for a Coffee, or Tea,  
and Biscuits and a social chat with others. Do  
come along and join us. For further information  
contact Christine on 01676 532793.

## **Heart of England WI**

Date: every 2nd Thursday of the month / Time:  
7.30pm / Venue: Balsall Common Village Hall  
The Heart of England Women's Institute is a  
thriving group, with lively members aged from  
mid-20s to 90s. New members are always  
welcome. Talks for the autumn include Early  
Years at the Savoy on 8th September, Modern  
Manners on 13th October and a practical

demonstration of Bulbs for Your Spring Display to  
follow in November. More information is on  
Heart of England WI Facebook page or by  
phoning Lyn 01676 533675 or Kathryn 01676  
534824. Email: hoewi2019@hotmail.com

## **Card Club**

Date: every 2 weeks on Mondays / Time: 2.15 -  
4pm / Venue: Balsall Common Library  
Refreshments are provided for a small charge.  
For more information please ask at help Desk, call  
us on 01676 532 590 or visit [www.solihull.gov.uk/library-events](http://www.solihull.gov.uk/library-events)

## **Berkswell and Balsall Common Sports & Community Association**

Date: varied / Time: varied / Venue: The Lant,  
Meeting House Lane, Balsall Common  
With cricket, hockey, running, sailing and tennis  
clubs plus a clubhouse and bar. Facilities also  
available for private hire. See [www.bbcsca.co.uk](http://www.bbcsca.co.uk)  
or Facebook - BBCSCA / Berkswell Sports Bar for  
more information.

## **Firebird Singers**

Date: every Friday / Time: 7pm - 9pm / Venue:  
Meriden Village Hall, Main Road, Meriden  
Singing for pleasure whilst raising money for  
charity. Anyone that enjoys singing is welcome to  
join the choir. We sing to raise money for  
worthwhile causes. Make new friends, have a  
good sing song and a cup of tea at half time. If  
you are interested in joining the choir Please  
contact Anna on 07792525999 or Val on 01676  
522963

## **Heart of England WI**

Date: 2nd Thursday of the month / Time:  
7.30pm / Venue: Balsall Common Village Hall, 112  
Station Road CV7 7FF  
The Heart of England Women's Institute is a  
thriving group, with lively members who enjoy  
rambles, lunches, coffee mornings and craft eve-  
nings. New members are always welcome.  
Our 9th February meeting will be all about Stress  
Management - a useful tool for the New Year  
maybe? More information is on Heart of England  
WI Facebook page or by phoning Lyn 01676  
533675 or Kathryn 01676 534824.

## **Santa's Sleigh touring the Village**

Date: 15<sup>th</sup> - 23<sup>th</sup> of December  
Follow Santa's progress throughout December to  
see when he's visiting your street. For more  
information see Balsall Common Lion's Club  
Facebook Page

## **Free Digital Training for older Solihull residents**

Various times and Age UK Solihull are offering  
free digital training for older Solihull residents  
who would like to improve their digital skills.  
Group courses and one-to-one support is  
available, for both beginners and those who  
already have basic digital skills. The training can  
help with online shopping, video calling,



searching for information, accessing online learning, downloading and using apps, and more. For more information, contact Ashlee on 07397 718 455 or visit [www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/digital-champions](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/digital-champions)

### Grab a slice of the action with Jingle Bakes

Date: a day of your choice in December  
Enjoy your favourite treats and help raise vital funds for Age UK Solihull by organising a Jingle Bakes festive bake sale this December. Hold your bake sale at home, at work, with friends, neighbours or colleagues – the choice is yours. A Jingle Bakes sale offers a chance to get together, feel festive and do something special to help vulnerable local older people this Christmas. Find out more and sign up at [www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/jingle-bakes](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/jingle-bakes)

### Age UK Solihull is 40!

Local older people's charity, Age UK Solihull, is celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2023. The charity has been providing advice, support and companionship for older people in Solihull since 1983 and will be hosting several activities and events throughout the year. Find out how you can

get involved at [www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/we-are-40](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/solihull/we-are-40)

### The Strolling Players : "Mince Pies and Melodies"

Date: 9th, 10th of December / Time: 7.30pm on the 9th; 2.30pm on the 10th / Venue: Knowle Village Hall

The Strolling Players offer a tuneful start to December with their concert "Mince Pies and Melodies". Tickets: £10.00 available from Joan Ransom: 01564 777634 and from Stephen Yeomans: 01564 778163

### Cinema Organ Society - Live Concert on our 1935 Mighty Compton

Date: February 5th / Time: Doors open 1.30 pm, Curtain up 2.30 pm / Venue: Fentham Hall, Marsh Lane, Hampton-in-Arden, B92 0AH

A warm welcome awaits. No need to book. Our guest organists are Cameron Lloyd and Damon Willetts. Admission £10 cash on the door, including interval refreshments and parking. Please telephone 01564 794778 for more details. [www.facebook.com/COSMidlandsCompton](http://www.facebook.com/COSMidlandsCompton), or [www.cinema-organs.org.uk](http://www.cinema-organs.org.uk)

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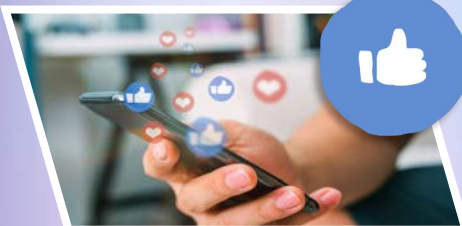
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# HELP MAKE THIS CHRISTMAS A LITTLE BRIGHTER

## FOR A LONELY OLDER PERSON



As so many song lyrics tell us, Christmas should be “the most wonderful time of the year”. For many people this is true, but this month we’d like to give some thought to those who might not enjoy this time of year, especially the elderly.

The charity Age UK found that 1.4 million older people across the UK are expecting to feel lonely at Christmas.

“The COVID-19 pandemic has had a huge impact on the nation’s mental health, and older people have been hit hardest in terms of mortality and have often found the restrictions and lockdowns very isolating and hard to bear. The Charity’s new survey shows that nearly a million older people don’t have anyone to celebrate the festive period with this year, and when it comes to spending Christmas alone this year, around 675,000 over-65s are feeling fed up about this, around 625,000 are feeling depressed, around 400,000 feel forgotten and around 250,000 feel anxious”

So what can we do to help?

December is a busy time for everybody, but there are small things we can all do to help.

### ARRANGE A VISIT

Do you have family members or neighbours who will be alone? Can you offer them a seat at your Christmas table? Or can you pop in and visit at some point during the day? If not Christmas day, then around the Christmas period and let that person know when they can expect you so they have something to look forward to. Even a cup of tea with a mince pie and a chat can have a positive impact.

### TAKE THE TIME TO CALL

If you can’t physically be with a family member, then call them instead. A simple phone call can make all of the difference. In fact recent analysis also found “that a phone call from a loved one is the best Christmas present many older people feel they can receive, so Age UK is encouraging everyone to make the effort to phone an older friend over the Christmas season, so they know they are not forgotten”.

### HELP WITH THEIR SHOPPING

Pop around to your elderly neighbour and ask if you can take them out to the shops so that they can buy food or to get out of the house. Being alone can be a long day, with little to do.

### HELP WITH CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS

Many people living alone don’t bother to decorate the house and it can make a big difference and help lift their mood. Buy your neighbour a small tree and decorate it for them. Don’t forget to let them know you will also take it away, so that they don’t need to worry about the cleaning up.

### ATTEND A CHRISTMAS EVENT AT A LOCAL COMMUNITY CENTRE OR CHURCH

Charities such as Community Christmas and Contact the Elderly, help volunteers to organise events and tea parties.

### OFFER TO DRIVE AN ELDERLY NEIGHBOUR TO AN EVENT

Encourage someone you know to get out and about to events over the festive season. By offering to drive them, it might be the nudge they need to overcome any anxiety, especially on Christmas Day when transport is limited.

Source: Age UK





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# RESTAURANTS

## & TAKEAWAYS

BALSALL COMMON,  
BERKSWELL

**BENGAL BRASSERIE** *Indian*

349-351 Kenilworth Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7DL  
**01676 533 883**

**MASALA CLUB** *Indian*

235-239 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7EG  
**1676 533 210**

**THE BRICKMAKERS ARMS** *Gastropub*

307 Station Road, Berkswell CV7 7EG  
**01676 533 890**

**THE WHITE HORSE** *British, European*

Kenilworth Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7DT  
**01676 533 207**

**THE GEORGE IN THE TREE** *Gastropub*

Kenilworth Rd CV7 7EX  
**01676 533 118**

**CAFE TAMARINDS** *Pan-Asian*

376 Kenilworth Rd CV7 7ER  
**01676 533 308**

**BALSALL COMMON FISH BAR** *Fish & Chips*

207 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7FE  
**01676 533 576**

**LA DELICIA** *British, European*

231 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7EG  
**01676 532 177**

**ORIENTAL EXPRESS** *Chinese Takeaway*

176 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7FD  
**01676 535 900**

**COSTA COFFEE** *Café*

unit 2 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7FE  
**01676 529 277**

**MCKEES BRASSERIE** *British, European*

273 Kenilworth Road, Balsall Common CV7 7EL  
**01676 533 004**

**OAKES FARM SHOP & CAFE** *Cafe*

Balsall Street, Balsall Common CV7 7AQ  
**01676 535 537**

**YE OLDE SARACENS HEAD** *Gastropub*

Balsall Street, Balsall Common CV7 7AS  
**01676 533 862**

**DOMINO'S PIZZA** *Takeaway Pizza*

209 Station Road, Balsall Common, CV7 7FE  
**01676 530 099**

**THE RAILWAY** *Gastropub*

547 Station Rd, Balsall Common CV7 7EF  
**01676 533 284**

**THE OAK ROOM AT NAILCOTE HALL HOTEL** *British, European*

Nailcote Lane, Berkswell  
**02476 466 174**

**BEAR INN** *Gastropub*

Spencers Lane, Berkswell CV7 7BB  
**01676 925 562**

**MERIDEN**

**THE BARN AT BERRYFIELDS FARM** *Cafe*

The Berryfields Farm Shop, Berkswell Road,  
Meriden CV7 7LB

**01676 522 155**

**MARCO PIERRE WHITE** *European*

The Manor Hotel at Meriden, Main Road,  
Meriden CV7 7NH

**01676 522 735**

**STRAWBERRY BANK HOTEL & RESTAURANT** *British*

Main Rd, Meriden CV7 7NF

**01676 522 117**

**THE BULLS HEAD** *Gastropub*

Main Rd, Meriden CV7 7NN

**01676 523 798**

**HAMPTON IN ARDEN**

**THE LAKE AT BARSTON** *Global Grill*

Marsh House Farm Ln, Barston B92 0LB

**01675 444 890**

**THE WHITE LION INN** *Gastropub*

High Street, Hampton-in-Arden

**01675 442 833**

**BEECHES BAR & GRILL** *Gastropub*

Hampton-in-Arden B92 0AH

**01675 442 277**

**PEEL'S RESTAURANT** *British, European*

Hampton Manor, Shadow Brook Lane,  
Hampton in Arden B92 0EN

**01675 446 080**

**TOBY CARVERY** *British*

Stonebridge Island, Coventry Rd, Meriden CV7 7HL

**01675 442 326**



# USEFUL LOCAL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

## MEDICAL

NHS Advice Line & Out of Hours Dental Advice 111	
Warwick Hospital	01926 495 321
Coventry University Hospital	02476 964 000
Solihull Hospital	0121 424 2000
Balsall Common Health Centre	01676 935 000

## POLICE & FIRE

West Midlands Police	0845 113 5000 or 101
Warwickshire Fire & Rescue	01675 62 007
Bickenhill Community Fire Station	0121 380 7527
Solihull Fire Station	0121 380 7521

## HELPLINES & HOTLINES

Samaritans	116123
Consumer Advice	03454 04 05 06
Citizens Advice Bureau	01926 457 900
RSPCA	024 7671 3717

## UTILITIES

Electricity Power Loss	0800 3281111
Severn Trent Water	0800 783 4444
Transco Gas Leak	0800 111 999
BT Fault Line	0800 800151
National Rail Enquiries:	03457 48 49 50

## TRAVEL

Chiltern Railways	08456 005165
National Rail Enquiries	08457 484950
West Midlands Trains	0333 311 0039
Bus Travel Line	0871 2002233
Coventry Airport	02476 301717
Birmingham Airport BHX	0871 222 0072

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# HOROSCOPES: DECEMBER / JANUARY

## ARIES MARCH 21 - APRIL 20

The Sun, Venus and Mercury are all shining favourable light on the sector of your chart concerned with the higher mind, further education and travel. Under current trends, you should be making some exciting plans for a very bright 2023, particularly as abundant Jupiter arrives in your sign on the 21st. The powerful Gemini full moon on the 8th puts you in a talkative mood and turns your attention to inspirational thinking. Your ambitions and your highest goals are in the spotlight during January as you plan for what could turn out to be a transformational year. Dynamic Mars, your ruler, is strong in fiery Sagittarius, emphasising the need for you to connect with your higher mind. Excellent opportunities are now available, providing that you use your confidence and courage!

## TAURUS APRIL 21 - MAY 21

Venus in Sagittarius challenges assertive Mars in your monetary sector this month, suggesting that you might be inclined to make some impulsive decisions around your finances, best to get some solid advice and maybe wait until Mars goes direct in January. The powerful Jupiter Neptune conjunction in Pisces offers inspiration and the possibility of a mystical experience. January: The line-up of planets at a pivotal sector of your chart ensure that further education, travel and romance are seriously linked together this month. Your ruler, love planet Venus, is currently in down-to-earth Capricorn, moving back to direct motion on the 29th. A relationship issue that has been concerning you for months could at last present the practical answer you seek.

## GEMINI MAY 22 - JUNE 21

The high energy planet Mars is still retrograde in your sign illuminating the fact that your projects are not going according to plan. It's time to review your impulsive nature and take stock, listen to close friends as they can offer you fresh insight to do things differently. The auspicious Jupiter and Neptune combination in Pisces suggests heightened insight and intuition. January: Dynamic Mars and the emotional moon are a powerful combination in Sagittarius at the start of the month. Partnership issues are concerning you and it's now time to put your point of view across and win support from an unexpected quarter. Finances arrive in the spotlight after the Cancerian full moon on the 17th, take full advantage of any opportunities that come your way.

## CANCER JUNE 22 - JULY 22

The Sun and Mercury both illuminate your health and wellbeing area, suggesting that your vitality is high and you could be feeling more robust than usual. December is the perfect time to forge ahead with a personal ambition and bring a long term project to a close. Love planet Venus in adventurous Sagittarius until the 10th indicates that a new romance may be on the horizon. January: Your health and wellbeing are high on your agenda at the start of this month as Mars and the moon in Sagittarius urge you to take stock and put more energy into a good life balance. The pivotal full moon in your sign on the 17th offers a challenge, but also helps you to reach a new understanding if you trust your intuition and your instincts.

## LEO JULY 23 - AUGUST 23

The Sun, Venus and Mercury are travelling through adventurous Sagittarius and all three are offering you a new sense of direction where love and creativity are concerned. Your future plans with a possible new partnership look exciting, so don't be afraid to take the initiative. The Capricorn new moon on the 23rd looks auspicious, turning your attention to an exciting practical plan. January: As forceful Mars in Sagittarius is now active in a pivotal sector of your chart, you'll find that your focus is changing. The value of broadening your horizons and using your creative talents becomes increasingly important. The full moon in Cancer on the 17th throws some light on an issue that's been troubling you for a while.

## VIRGO AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 22

Venus and Mercury in fiery Sagittarius continue to highlight the domestic sector of your chart, suggesting a dynamic month where you can make the most of your self-confidence and creative ability to make positive changes within your home. Mystical Neptune and abundant Jupiter traveling together in Pisces ensure that prospects are looking rather good for harmonious relationships. January: Relationship minded Venus remains in practical Capricorn all month, continuing the theme of all things to do with love and romance. You might need to let go of any preconceived ideas about trying to solve a recent problem, go with the flow and use your intuition. The Cancer full moon on the 17th brings some fresh insight and lucky Jupiter in Pisces also lends a helping hand to whatever is bothering you.

## LIBRA SEPTEMBER 23 - OCTOBER 23

Venus, your ruling planet, is in adventurous and intuitive Sagittarius until the 10th, this cycle suggests that communication is your top priority and any exchange of ideas may bring huge rewards. Normally energetic Mars is retrograde in Gemini, try to stay patient and tolerant as you'll need to find some new solutions to old problems. Be alert to new opportunities after the new moon on the 23rd. January: Vibrant Mars in Combination with the fiery Sagittarian moon ensure a dynamic start to the month. Your communication skills are the main focus and anything that's not working will have to be scrutinised and changed. Jupiter and Neptune highlight your health and wellbeing as new and exciting ways of keeping fit present themselves, particularly around the Cancer full moon on the 17th.

## SCORPIO OCTOBER 24 - NOVEMBER 22

The Sun, Venus, and Mercury are all highlighting the financial area of your chart, be sure to make the most of your profound and analytical intellect as you make some important decisions for the future. Beneficial Jupiter coupled with mystical Neptune in Pisces both illuminate the love sector of your chart, enabling you to make some positive romantic choices. January: The Sun, Venus, Pluto and Mercury are all activating the communication sector of your chart offering a new sense of direction concerning some important interaction. Future plans look rosy so don't be afraid to take the initiative. The Capricorn new moon on the 2nd is significant as it highlights the possibility of linking your creative ideas with some firm foundations.

## SAGITTARIUS NOVEMBER 23 - DECEMBER 21

This month is all about putting yourself first and fully recognising your potential. Major change is now coming your way and new beginnings are eminent. Mercury and Venus both energise your sign until the second week of December, use this time to really focus on those all-important future plans. Be sure to stand your ground, and be ready to achieve whatever you set your heart on. January: A busy month is indicated as vibrant Mars aligns with the moon in your sign. Four planets in Capricorn suggest that rearranging some financial issues will become a central theme. You may feel the need to break free from old ways of doing things, but if you keep an open mind, you can learn a great deal. The full moon in Cancer on the 17th offers you a sense of changing priorities.

## CAPRICORN DECEMBER 22 - JANUARY 20

The month starts with a powerful combination of the moon, Neptune and Jupiter together in mystical Pisces in the communication sector of your chart. This potent energy heightens your intuition and suggests exciting new beginnings. You may feel the need to break free from old ways of doing things, it's important to keep an open mind as you can now learn a great deal from those around you. January: Four planets in your sign appear to be marking the beginning of a new chapter in your life, just right for the start of the New Year! Jupiter is strong in Pisces, encouraging you to be flexible about the future and to be prepared to change your plans. The new moon in your sign on the 2nd offers you some extra powers of persuasion.

## AQUARIUS JANUARY 21 - FEBRUARY 18

The Sun, Venus and Mercury in Sagittarius are powerful in the area of your chart concerned with community spirit and humanitarian goals. Your vitality should be high and your big ideas could lead to remarkable results, so be sure to make your thinking optimistic and forward-looking. The Gemini full moon on the 8th is particularly auspicious and highlights your creative aspirations. January: Dynamic Mars in Sagittarius gives you great enthusiasm and a buoyancy when it comes to achieving your goals. New contacts can arrive out of nowhere and your networking skills will be at their very best. Wise Saturn in your sign gives you staying power for new projects as you leave recent problems behind and win the recognition that you deserve.

## PISCES FEBRUARY 19 - MARCH 20

A positive start to the month seems to be assured with the connection of the moon, Neptune and Jupiter in your sign. If your ambition has been lacking lately, don't worry, it's all change now as the Sun in fiery Sagittarius lights up the highest point in your chart. You need to speak your mind about certain issues that have been troubling you for a while, take advantage of the practical Capricorn new moon on the 23rd. January: Expansive Jupiter is now firmly in your sign filling you with hope for a rewarding year ahead. Big ideas lead to remarkable results, so be sure to make your thinking optimistic and forward-looking. The new moon in Capricorn on the 2nd highlights friends and group activities that are connected to your personal aims and goals, teamwork is the way forward!

Christine Chalkin, Inspirational Astrologer and Life Coach  
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# MONEY SAVING AT CHRISTMAS

UK inflation reached 11.1% in October 2022, marking a 41-year high. Rising costs from rent and mortgages, and from energy to food, means it is harder than ever for many of us to make the ends meet. Here are some tips that will help you save money and still enjoy the festivities this Christmas.

## PRESENTS

**BARGAIN-HUNT:** Perfectly good quality items can be found in some charity shops and websites that sell second-hand goods (Facebook Marketplace, eBay, Depop, Vinted etc.). You can also sell some of your own items to raise money for Christmas. You may be able to get something you need, *for free*, from certain local community group such as Acts of Kindness Chiltern And Surrounding or Next Door.

**SECRET SANTA:** Instead of buying and receiving many presents from family and friends, a Secret Santa scheme organises the family and friends to exchange presents in a way that everyone only has to buy one gift. You can make it a fun family game by guessing the identity of everyone's Secret Santa after the presents are exchanged. Other variations of the arrangement, like White Elephant, can also turn the gift-exchange event into a party game.

**GET CREATIVE:** Homemade gifts can be personalised easily, and they are always more special than the ones bought from the high-street. Inspiration and tutorials for DIY presents such as gingerbread Christmas ornaments, citrus marmalade, scented salt scrubs, hand warmers, pin cousins, etc., can be found on websites like Pinterest, YouTube and TikTok. Many of the DIY items can be made within a couple of hours at home, without special tools or professional skills.

Another creative gift idea is hand-written

vouchers to provide quality time or services to your family and friends. For example, you could offer to cook a special meal, organise a movie night, build a compost bin or garden shed, or arrange a winter woodland walk.

## THE GIFT WRAPS

**CREATIVE WRAPPING:** Instead of wrapping the presents, decorate the box that comes with them. You could use pictures/photos from old fashion magazines, comic books or newspaper.

**Leftover fabric:** It requires no tape (tie it with ribbon) and can be re-used again and again.

**GIFT BAGS:** Collect and save gift bags that have been given to you previously - usually, they can be re-used several times.

**RECYCLABLE BROWN PARCEL PAPER:** They are comparable in price to the shiny modern wrapping papers, which often contain plastic and are non-recyclable. You could use a sprig of holly or pine corns to decorate the parcel paper, which will add Christmas feel!

## CHRISTMAS TREE

**ROOTED TREE IN A POT:** You can move the potted tree outdoors after Christmas and care for it. You can then re-use the tree for many successive Christmas celebrations!

**ARTIFICIAL TREE:** Look for a second-hand one in charity shops, Facebook groups or Freecycle-type groups, it would be less expensive than a new one. It will also keep another tree out of landfill!

**A CUT TREE:** Make sure it is sustainably sourced (The Forestry Commission, FSC), and dispose of it responsibly (make wood chippings or compost). Most councils offer free disposal.

Remember, every little helps - even if you only opt for one of these ideas.

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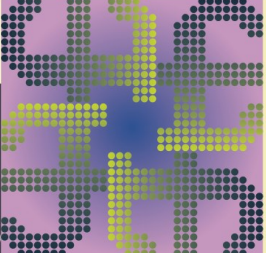
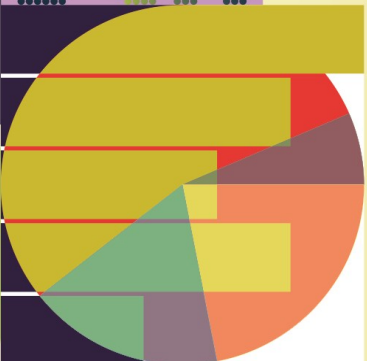


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